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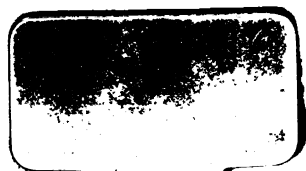
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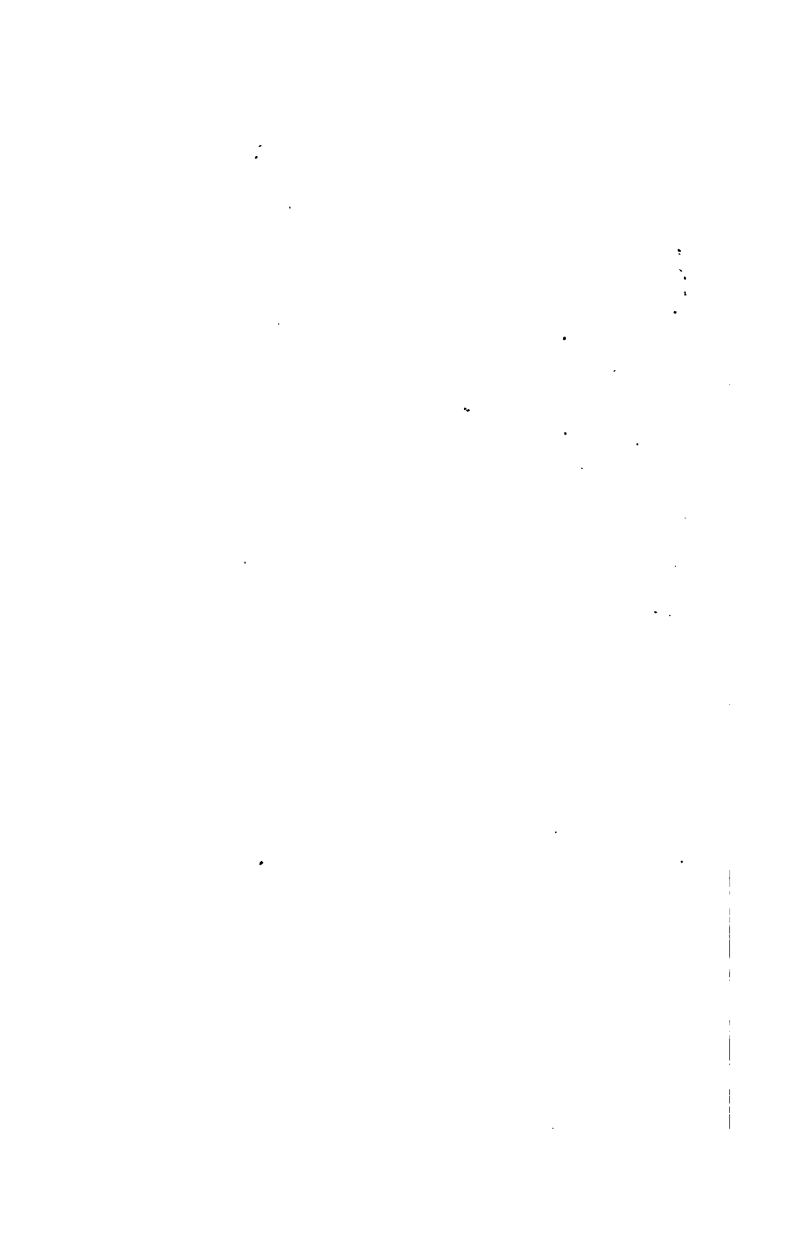
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THE
BEGINNINGS OF EVIL:

BEING

Tales on the Ten Commandments.

By H. M. R.

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THE PIC-NIC.

First Commandment.

Grieve not to trust thy opening bud
Into God's holy Hand,
He wills it bloom in heavenly light,
And near His throne to stand."

NOW, Fanny, dear, it is time for you to go to school," said a care-worn looking woman to her pretty daughter of fourteen years old.

"Mother, I don't want to go to school," answered Fanny, "I must watch you eat the pudding you promised me, and it is sure to rain, and then I should be sitting so long in my wet things."

Wilson looked anxiously at the clouds; "I think, my darling, that it will rain,"

"and you know Mr. Gordon is going to see those girls who wish to be confirmed to-morrow evening, and he said that you had been negligent in your attendance at his

classes lately that if you missed again he should refuse you a ticket."

"Yes, mother, I know," she replied, "but I have changed my mind, and don't want to be confirmed now; I have seen the caps that Mary Day and Bessie Nutt are to wear, and they are so ugly, just the shape of that bag you are putting the pudding in; I could not cram my curls into it. You may shake your head, and try to look grave, but I am sure you would not like to see your Fanny's head transformed into a boiled rice pudding. Ah, I am glad to see you smile again, dear mother, for I am going to ask you to promise me something, without which I shall be very unhappy."

"What is it?" said Mrs. Wilson, "I am afraid I spoil you sadly, for there is very little I refuse you."

"I know you are a dear, kind mother," replied Fanny, "and will not deny me this pleasure, which I have set my heart upon. The truth is that as I was standing by the gate just now I saw Anne Smith pass by, and she told me that the Forresters are to have a picnic at Sunningdale on the 20th of this month, to which she is going with her mother, and she can get me leave to go too, if you will let me."

"Fanny, I cannot think of such a thing!"

exclaimed Mrs. Wilson, "why that is the very day of the Confirmation!"

"Yes, mother, I remember that, but I really do not wish to be confirmed now; there will be another opportunity soon, and then I shall be more prepared and steadier."

"I trust so, my dear, but it seems like going back in goodness to give up what you have been thinking of so long: suppose any dreadful thing should happen to you?"

"Oh, mother, dear, what can happen, except that I shall enjoy myself of all things? I am to go, you know, with Mrs. Smith, who is the steadiest of the steady. We are to sail down the river in a large house boat, there is to be a band of music on board, and when we land at Sunningdale we are to have dinner under the trees, and a dance on the green afterwards, and we are to be home again by eight o'clock in the evening. Oh, it will be delightful!"

"Well, dear Fanny," said Mrs. Wilson, "I do not like to deny you such a treat, but be careful not to get into any danger."

"I will be sure to take care of myself, dear mother," cried Fanny, clapping her hands, "and there are three kisses for you, for so kindly falling in with your foolish girl's wishes. I must wear my white frock I suppose, but my hat ought to have a feather, as the pink ribbons are so very faded."

"Well, we will see about it when we go into the town," answered the fond mother, who so doted upon her only child that she sacrificed everything, even her principles, for the gratification of this treasure. She worshipped God's gift, and turned His blessing into a snare.

The day of the fête and of the Confirmation arrived, as brilliant as Fanny could wish; the sun shone without a cloud, and the birds seemed as if they could not sing loud enough for joy and thankfulness.

Fanny was dressed early, and certainly did look very pretty in her white frock and blue ribbons, which suited her fair and bright complexion; the hat with its new white feather shading the lively face, and dancing blue eyes, and sunny curls, without concealing them.

Mrs. Wilson stood at her door watching her little daughter running down the hill to the river's bank, to join the group waiting there for the boat, and perhaps she may be pardoned in thinking her Fanny the most lovely object her eyes ever beheld.

"There," she said to herself, "people tell me I make an idol of my darling, and love her too much, but how can I help loving her when she is so good and beautiful, and the only child I have left out of four little babies—my poor husband also dead—can it

be wrong for a lonely widow to love her only child?"

So reasoned Mrs. Wilson, forgetting that those who love any object more than God are not worthy of Him, and that she placed the creature before the Creator. Such sins are sure to bring their own punishment with them.

Meanwhile little Fanny flitted along as happy as possible, the only check to her high spirits was her chancing to meet the carriage conveying the candidates for Confirmation to the neighbouring town, where the rite was to be administered. They looked so gravely happy, there was such a calm hopeful expression on each young face, that Fanny felt a pang of conscience, and a doubt would arise in her mind as to whether she had chosen the wiser part. But the carriage soon passed, and her gay companions called to her to make haste and come, for the boat was in sight.

When once there, with the music and flattering voices, and happy faces, she thought of nothing but the enjoyment of the present hour. Then followed the dancing on the grass, the dinner spread under the trees, and the games afterwards; she was made a great deal of, for everybody was fond of her, and praised her liveliness, beauty, and sweet temper, until her head was full of vanity, and

her spirits were raised beyond control. Self appeared to her to be the first object in life, and to bring happiness to that little self seemed the proper destiny of every human being.

The day did not pass slowly to Mrs. Wilson, she was a busy, active woman, and took in washing, which she managed very well, and therefore obtained plenty of employment; but she was so careful of her little girl that she only allowed her to help in the light work, and therefore did not miss her much on this occasion. She gave a sigh now and then for the merry voice and bright face which were the delight and pride of her heart, and paused in hanging her white garments to dry to imagine what Fanny was then doing, and whether she would enjoy herself as much as she expected.

Now the time came for Fanny's return, the clothes were all dry and folded, the kettle was singing its contented and most comfortable song, the cat had chosen the warmest place by the fire and was eyeing with a complacent air the preparations for tea, and the hot toast on the hob, which was imbibing as much butter as it could carry.

Mrs. Wilson looked round the room, there was nothing wanting to add brightness to the scene, or that could offer a warmer welcome to the tired little pleasure-seeker when she made

her appearance, so she stepped outside her house to watch for her darling's return, without whom she feels home would be valueless, and life would be a blank.

What does she see in the distance which makes her heart throb with horror? There is a great crowd collected, they stand by the water's edge, the boat is there also, and people run this way and that as if some accident had happened and they were all in great trouble and perplexity—suppose anything should be the matter with her treasure! The thought was frightful, and she remained without the power of moving, and felt as if a terrible dream was passing, while she saw the crowd divide, and two or three people approach carrying some object between them; they came nearer, and poor Mrs. Wilson sinks to the ground, for her trembling knees can no longer support her as she recognizes the form they bear to be that of her darling child, her clothes dripping with wet, and she to all appearance dead. When the neighbours saw Mrs. Wilson, they ran to her, and tried to raise her from the ground, and explain to her that Fanny could not be much hurt, for she was only a moment in the water. She was crossing a plank which led from the boat to the shore when she turned quickly to make a laughing reply to some one still in the boat, unfortunately her foot slipped

and she fell into the river; she was instantly pulled out by those on the shore, but they feared she must have fallen against a stone or something else, as she was still insensible. The doctor was sent for at once, and would no doubt be here directly, when he would be sure to tell her there was not much the matter.

Poor Mrs. Wilson seemed as if she could not listen to them just then, she turned away her face, and rising with sudden strength, she helped them to place her daughter in her little bed, taking off her wet things, and wrapping her in blankets: they then rubbed her chilled limbs in hopes of restoring animation, but without effect; and most anxiously they waited for the doctor, who however soon came, accompanied by the clergyman. He was returning from the Confirmation in his carriage, when he heard what had happened, and drove home quickly for such things as he thought might be wanted before he joined the terror-stricken party at the cottage.

With what fear and trembling the group round the bed watched the exertions of the doctor to bring back life to the little inanimate form, may be imagined; the mother, with a white stony face, did mechanically all that was required of her, but she never spoke, and her eyes never left her daughter's face. At last a

thrill passed through every one present, for they perceived a slight quiver cross Fanny's lips for a moment,—then came a sigh,—and gradually her breathing returned, and she opened her eyes which all feared had been closed for ever.

When she saw her mother bending over her and gazing with trembling hope in her face, she softly uttered her name, but the reaction from despondency to hope was too much for poor Mrs. Wilson, she fell down in a fainting fit, and her neighbours carried her into another room. She soon came to herself, and was the further cheered by the news that Fanny was certainly better; Mr. Gordon made her drink a glass of wine, for he told her he feared she had still a great deal of anxiety to go through.

"Oh, sir, pray for me," she said, "if perhaps my sin may be forgiven me; I see now how wicked I have been in loving my little girl more than my God. I brought her up to live only for vanity and pleasure, and when I saw her lying dead, as I thought, I knew that I had killed her, body and soul. Pray for her, sir, that she may be spared for a little while, to return to her SAVIOUR's fold, and that I may have grace given me to repent, and to undo some of the evil I have done."

"You certainly have been too indulgent to Fanny," replied Mr. Gordon, "and allowed

yourself to love her too much, giving her all your heart, which ought to belong to God only. But let us pray that this judgment may have been sent in mercy to draw you both nearer to Him. I must not keep you from your poor invalid now; I will call again early in the morning, and I hope I shall find her as much better as we could wish."

Mrs. Wilson thanked him for his kindness, and went to Fanny's bedside, where the doctor still remained, but his little patient had fallen into a quiet sleep; the mother gave a long loving look at the sweet face lying there so very white and still, and it suddenly struck her with a pang of anguish, that the expression of her darling's features was different to what it had ever been before, there seemed a sort of wan look, as if the finger of death had left his mark upon her. Mrs. Wilson gave a startled imploring glance at the doctor, and saw that he looked very grave and sad.

"Sir," she whispered, "tell me, is she dying?"

"I will not deceive you, my poor woman," he answered, "I fear she will never be strong again."

"Will she die to-night?" asked Mrs. Wilson in a low voice; "pray, sir, do not hide anything from me."

"No," he replied, "no immediate change

is to be apprehended; but poor little Fanny must have struck her back against a stone when she fell into the river, for I fear she has injured her spine; if so, she may linger for some time, but I can do nothing to save her life. I feel very sorry for you, Mrs. Wilson, but I think it kinder that you should know the worst at once. I wish I may find cause in the morning to alter my opinion."

When he was gone, Mrs. Wilson begged her neighbours to leave her, and remained alone by her little girl's bedside to wrestle with her grief, and to struggle for resignation; she prayed as she had never prayed before, that the past might be forgiven her, and that she might have grace to redeem the time to come, that her cross might become a blessing to her. She rose from her knees somewhat comforted, and resolving that she would leave all in the hands of God, for He knew what was best for her and her child also, when she saw that Fanny's eyes were wide open, and fixed upon her.

"Have you been praying for me, dear mother?" she said; "I hope you have, for I seem too weak to pray for myself; I see how my whole life has been passed in folly, vanity, and idleness, and now God is going to call me to appear before Him, and what account can I give of the fourteen years I have passed here?"

"My darling, it is my fault that you have

not thought more of serious things," exclaimed her mother, "I have been too anxious about your happiness in this world, and not thought enough of your eternal welfare; but we will repent together, dear Fanny, and perhaps our Heavenly FATHER will forgive us both, and spare you to me a little longer."

"No, mother, I feel sure I shall never get up again; I cannot move my body in the least, it feels like a useless log; and if I thought my sins would be forgiven, I should be glad to die, that I might be saved from sinning any more. But you must not blame yourself, dear mother, for my faults, for you have often warned me that I was acting wrong, but I did not listen to you."

"Well, Fanny, I must not let you talk any more now, you must try and rest, and in the morning Mr. Gordon is coming, and will tell us both what we must do to repent."

So Mrs. Wilson shaded the light from her daughter's eyes, and saying a short but fervent prayer, Fanny dozed till the morning, and then awoke with the same impossibility of moving her lower limbs, which made poor Mrs. Wilson fear there was no hope; and when the doctor came he shook his head sorrowfully, and owned that she would never rise from her bed again, but that she might remain some weeks in her present state.

Fanny begged to be told exactly what he said, and then watched with feverish eagerness for Mr. Gordon's coming. She was so anxious to talk with him, and hear if he thought she might ever hope to be forgiven, especially with regard to her neglect of Confirmation, which weighed very heavily on her conscience.

Mr. Gordon did not keep them long expecting, he was a good and kind man, to whom every one might go in their difficulties, both of soul and body. He was gentle and patient to all, but at the same time he did not conceal their faults, or hesitate to tell them when he saw them in the wrong.

"Sir, I am so glad to see you," said poor Fanny, "for whenever I have been awake in the night, I have been thinking that there is no hope for me either in this world or the next."

"Fanny, we must never despair of the mercy and love of God; our blessed SAVIOUR's love for us was so great that He came down upon earth, and suffered a cruel death to call sinners to repentance, and to save their souls. Do you feel real sorrow for having loved your own pleasure more than you loved your SAVIOUR?"

"Yes, sir, I know that I am sorry for my many sins, but how can I be sure that it is not the fear of eternal punishment only which affects me so strongly?"

"We can be sure of nothing, my poor child, in this life, but the love of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; fix your thoughts on Him, and remember His own words, 'He that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out;' and again, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He is not willing that any should perish. If God spared you a little longer, would you endeavour to love Him more, and think less of the vanities of this world?"

"Indeed," replied Fanny with tears in her eyes, "I trust and believe I should; but I am so weak and unstable, I am afraid of falling again if I was tempted."

Then Mr. Gordon led her to have faith in the grace of God, and to feel that even repentance must be His gift, and must be prayed for before we can hope to receive it. And after an earnest prayer, he left both Mrs. Wilson and her little girl much calmer, and more resigned to the will of God.

Poor Fanny remained in almost the same state for several weeks, Mr. Gordon seeing her every day, and finding her and her mother also very humble and contrite, but leaning on the love and mercy of their SAVIOUR, and looking forward with trembling hope to meeting hereafter in a happy immortality. The poor little girl was sometimes in much pain, but she bore

all with the greatest patience, not a murmur escaped her lips, and she would at those times get her mother to read to her some pretty hymns Mr. Gordon had lent her, which spoke of the joys of heaven, and of no sorrow or pain entering there. Mrs. Wilson was wonderfully calm and resigned at this trying time; she saw that Fanny was getting weaker, and she could not shut her eyes to the fact that the end must soon be; but she had given up her own will to that of her Heavenly FATHER, and was ready to part with her treasure into His hands when He saw fit. At length, after a night of great suffering, poor little Fanny breathed her last,—her mother was holding her hand, and Mr. Gordon was reading the prayer which commended her soul to God, when her spirit, purified and refined, returned to Him Who made it. The first early ray of sunshine flickered upon her soft features for a moment, but she was unconscious of it; the light that she saw arise in the land of happier spirits, was “the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings.”

Mrs. Wilson did not succumb to her great sorrow, she remained very quiet and gentle, but she had a kind word for all, and was ever ready to help those who needed it. Children especially were her delight, and Mr. Gordon advised her to give up washing, as she was not

so strong as she was formerly, and establish a school for little children ; this was to her a labour of love ; she was always kind and gentle to her scholars, though she was very firm in teaching obedience, and in checking vanity, or too great love of pleasure in her young flock, and they all loved and respected her accordingly.

Her religion was very cheerful, and full of hope ; and no one would guess as they saw her come with a calm and happy face into church every Sunday, after placing fresh flowers on the graves of her dear ones, lying side by side beneath the old yew tree in the churchyard, that her affections were once so concentrated upon the little girl last buried there, as to obstruct her view of her SAVIOUR and her hopes of Heaven.

Below the names on the grave-stone she placed these texts :—

“ Whoso loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.”

“ The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away ; blessed be the Name of the LORD.”



THE MINER'S SON.

Second Commandment.

"Waste not thy love on gold or toys,
They perish in a day ;
But seek in Heaven those blessed joys
Which never will decay."

WILLIE Jones was the son of a miner, who worked in the coal mines in the little village of Ashley, in Glamorganshire.

He was a sharp, active lad, and when he was old enough he followed the same employment as his father. At an early age he showed an extraordinary love of money, and a propensity for saving which evinced an amount of self-denial worthy of a better cause. When quite a little fellow, if any one gave him a penny he would keep it laid carefully by until he obtained another, so that at last quite a little sum was collected, and put away into his mother's best teapot for him ; and then he would give way to a burst of grief when she

spent it in buying a pair of shoes, or anything of which he was in want.

Unfortunately his father and mother rather fostered this tendency to hoarding in Willie's mind, by calling him their rich boy, and their saving son, and by telling him that he would heap up a fortune for himself one of these days, not perceiving that the love of money was becoming quite a passion with him, and that he was really worshipping those little pieces of coin instead of his Maker.

A story is told of Willie, that on one occasion when Mrs. Jones returned from market she brought back a nosegay with her, as it was difficult to make flowers grow in their garden so near the coal mines; she held it to Willie's nose, "Does it not smell sweet?" she said.

"What did it cost, mother?" he asked.

"A penny," was her reply.

The little mercenary boy took up a penny from the table, and holding it towards his mother, he exclaimed, "Try which smells the sweetest, mother."

One day when he was about seven years old, his father allowed him to go with some boys to a fair, which was held at a town about two miles distant, and gave him sixpence to spend there. This was the largest sum he had ever received at one time, and it gave him an unlimited amount of delight to look at it, and to

know that it was his very own, and that he could do as he liked with it. What he liked best would be, he felt, to hoard it up carefully and never to spend it, and he resolved that come what might he would bring it safe home again, for that it would be far more pleasure to him to have it always to look at than to spend it in the most captivating manner.

Presently the little merry party reached the town, where the fun of the fair was at its highest. They stopped first to look at Punch, and have a good laugh at his killing his wife and baby in his usual lively manner, and refusing to be hung afterwards ; I fear his terrible end and the fine moral of the play they did not trouble themselves much about. The next delight was a tremendously loud band with a bear dancing in the centre of the performers. Willie and his friends stood close to the big drum, which was about the size of Willie himself, and enjoyed to the utmost the loud thumps upon it, and the forlorn hoppings of poor Bruin.

But Willie never forgot his beloved sixpence or neglected his care of it for a moment ; he put it in his pocket, and kept it closed within his hand that he might have the pleasure of feeling it and knowing it was safe.

They next came to a merry-go-round, and Willie's companions were soon in the cars,

revelling in the delicious sensation of the swing, which felt something between the ascent of a balloon, and the pleasant movement of a boat in a high gale. Willie stood underneath, and watched them rising and falling, and listened to their shouts and laughter, and their entreaties to him to join them in their merry dances in the air; but nothing could tempt him, though they called him a coward, while all the time he was longing to be with them; still his sixpence remained unbroken in his pocket. "What, change that lovely lily-white coin," thought he, "and have only five ugly brown pieces of money in exchange!" the fun, great as it was, was not worth the outlay, and when his companions were turned out of the merry-go-round to make room for others, he congratulated himself at having resisted the temptation.

Close by was a menagerie of wild beasts, into which all the boys rushed with great delight, whilst the steadfast Willie contented himself with staring at the fierce lions and tigers painted outside, and listening to the roars of the real animals within, and the insatiable elephant ringing his bell for more cakes and gingerbread.

They afterwards passed by a show where a very fat lady exhibited herself; but Willie was satisfied with admiring her lovely portrait outside, as she appeared with red cheeks, and

flaxen, corkscrew ringlets, attired in a blue satin dress, her fat arms and fingers loaded with bracelets and rings. Next came a great attraction to the boys in the shape of a penny theatre, where the death of Nelson was immortalized; but though there was a great deal of firing, noise, and smoke, as Nelson sinking into Captain Hardy's arms cried, "'Ardy, 'Ardy, I am wounded, kiss me ere I die:" and though he showed himself to the admiring crowd outside in cocked hat, sword, and pig-tail, yet Willie's sixpence remained whole in his pocket.

Presently he found himself near a temptation of a very trying sort—this was a "cheap Jack," who was selling the most astonishing things at fabulously low prices. Knives that would cut through a deal board, boxes of pills that would cure all diseases under the sun, whips that would manage the most refractory animals, needles which if put into the work at night would be found to have finished it in the morning, magnificent gold watches warranted never to lose a moment and never to want winding up, and money boxes which had the wonderful power of doubling whatever money was put into them. This last Willie doubted over for some time, it would be so delightful to put his sixpence into the box and to find in a little while it

had turned into a shilling. But then to part with twopence out of his nice piece of silver would be too dreadful, so he walked resolutely away.

And now Willie began to be very hungry, and his mouth watered as his eyes met the piles of gingerbread, oranges, apples, and cakes on every side ; but he thought if he only waited until he returned home his mother would give him some supper, and what signified a little present discomfort to the lasting grief of having spent his money ? •

His companions soon got rid of their last penny, and then begged him to lend them his sixpence, but this he stoutly refused. A boy who had resisted all the fascinations of the fair for one unworthy object would not be likely to give up that object for the pleasure of others.

So the day closed in, and the boys returned home, and great was the laughter when it was told that Willie's sixpence was still snugly in his pocket, but he bore the ridicule very unconcernedly ; he felt he had the best of the argument in possessing his treasure still, and he gave so good an account of the wonders of the fair that his parents said he was a very clever boy for seeing so much for nothing.

Willie went to his bed with his worshipped sixpence under his pillow, and awoke as soon

as it was light to admire his cherished possession, and consider how he could add to it.

Mr. Hamilton, the clergyman, gave him sometimes a few pence for pulling up weeds in the Rectory garden, but his mother generally kept all the money he earned to help in buying his clothes. Now and then however he managed to scrape together some coppers surreptitiously by holding a gentleman's horse, or running on an errand for any one, and these pence he would secrete until he obtained a sufficient number to change them for a shilling, this was his secret but greatest delight.

When he was ten years old he began to work with his father in the coal mines, and being strong and willing he soon received good wages, and these continued to increase as he grew older and became more expert, especially as he was always ready to undertake the most dangerous work, not from the love of adventure or the ambition of overcoming difficulties, but solely from the desire of gain, so that among his companions he got the name of "Wide-awake Willie."

At the end of two years he asked his mother to allow him to keep his wages himself, out of which he would engage to provide his own food and clothing.

"Well, my dear," she said, "you are such a careful lad that I think I cannot do better

than let you have the care of your own money; perhaps you may make it go farther than I can, and I will promise to patch and mend for you as heretofore, and to cook the victuals you bring me."

This exactly suited Willie; he was now able to please himself by buying cheap but strong and very coarse garments, and food of a common sort, which was to be had at a low rate, but sufficiently good nevertheless to support him through his hard day's work in the dark regions underground.

By this means he was able to put by some of his wages every week, so that at the age of fifteen he had actually saved twenty pounds. This sum he kept in sovereigns, the brightest he could procure, and he tied them in a leathern bag which he kept in a hole dug in the floor of an outhouse. He visited this spot as may be supposed on every possible opportunity, the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning he stole to his treasure, and removing the stone which concealed the hole, he took out his bag, and spread the bright golden pieces before him, admiring their shining faces, and wishing that by counting them over and over again he could make more of them.

No ignorant heathen ever worshipped his hideous, deformed, miserable idol with more

adoration and greater reverence than Willie felt for his twenty sovereigns. They frequently appeared to him in his dreams at night, and when he was in church his thoughts were chiefly employed in reckoning how much of his earnings he should be able to put by the next morning.

No one will suppose after the description I have given of Willie's penurious habits that he ever gave any money away, he always declared he could not afford it, and as he kept his hoard an inviolable secret, everybody believed him.

About this time one of the miners was attacked with scarlet fever, which left him very ill and feeble for several weeks, so that he was not able to work ; then all his family took the infection, and in the midst of this sickness his wife added a ninth baby to the lot. They were reduced to the greatest distress, and obliged to sell their furniture at a time when they wanted it the most. The other miners, who generally feel much for any of their fellow-workmen when they are in difficulties, raised a little subscription, amongst themselves, to help this poor man Richards, and his large family ; and Willie was asked if he would not contribute a trifle in so good a cause ; but his usual reply, that "he could not spare it," was supposed to be

unanswerable. One morning he went early to count and admire his sovereigns, before starting for the mines. He could always do this without suspicion, as he and his father kept their mining tools in the outhouse, and, therefore, it was not surprising that he should go there. His treasure was all safe, and he issued forth with a glad face, his tools over his shoulder, thinking how soon he should add to his store, for he was going to have high wages to-day, as a new part of the mine was to be opened, and he had agreed to work there, upon receiving extra payment. He passed by Richards' cottage, where the eldest girl was standing outside the door; she was recovering from the fever, and looked very thin, and pale, and wan, and worse still, very hungry, and her large eyes filled with tears, as she gave a longing, wistful look at Willie's great hunch of bread and bacon, which he was carrying in his hand for his dinner down in the mine. His conscience gave him a twinge, and it crossed his mind, whether it would be possible to divide his dinner with little Mary; but then he knew that it would not be at all more than he should require to work upon all day, and that if he gave her this meal, and went to buy more, he should in that case be so much farther off the attainment of another sovereign, for which he was employing all his energies;

so he turned his face the other way, and pretended not to see her, and felt glad when he found himself descending into the pit—to those black caves, where the light of day never penetrated, and where his lamp shed but a faint trembling ray, making the awful darkness still more perceptible to those unaccustomed to such scenes. But Willie saw nothing dreadful in the place, he was so used to the black rocks on every side (spending nearly half his time amongst them), that he rather admired the mine, and considered it as a powerful means of coining money. Somehow to-day he did not feel in his usual spirits: the thin pinched face, and beseeching eyes, of poor little Mary, continually appeared before him. He worked away, however, vigorously, and was at the farthest extremity of the mine, far away from the other workmen, rejoicing in the thought that a few more strokes would admit him into the new chamber of coal; when, as he opened his lamp to trim it, there came a most tremendous noise, as if a cannon had been discharged close to his ear. The earth trembled and shook under him, he was thrown with violence to the ground, and remembered no more until he came to himself with a dull, confused feeling; he found himself in utter darkness, his lamp being crushed and extinguished in the fall. As his consciousness

gradually returned, the dreadful realities of his situation broke upon him; he groped along in the direction that he knew ought to lead him to the entrance of the mine, and found it closed up with huge masses of coal. He felt about on all sides—horror of horrors—he was enclosed in a crevice three feet wide, and about six feet long, his pickaxe too was buried under the chaos of coal, so that he had no power of helping himself in the least, or hope of making himself heard, shut in as he was within those thick walls.

Poor Willie tried to scream out loud, but only a muffled sound was the result, and from the intense stillness that reigned in his narrow prison, where the only sound audible was his own hurried breathing—he felt how hopelessly removed he was from the outer world, and from the help of man. He sat down on the floor, with his head buried in his hands, and imagined how long it would be at home before they missed him. He pictured his father returning after his day's work was over, and his mother asking where her Willie was? and his father answering, that "no doubt he will soon be here;" and then their waiting some time, and at last getting up and inquiring about him; and then, if they found out the slip, and at the end of several days had succeeded in digging through the mass of coal, what would

they find?—the miserable remains of their boy, starved to death in that terrible place! He shuddered, and sobbed aloud, as he wondered why he had not been crushed beneath the blocks of coal, instead of being reserved for this dreadful lingering death. Then he tried to turn his thoughts to God and Heaven, when all at once the besetting sin of his life rose up before him with terrible distinctness. Conscience showed him how he had made an idol of his money, how he had worshipped it all his life instead of his God, and all his wasted opportunities of improvement presented themselves to him, and the warnings he had had to turn from his evil ways and be saved. He could now perceive how the love of money had destroyed his love for his SAVIOUR, and for his fellow-creatures; how it had eaten all the good out of him, and left him selfish, covetous, and irreligious, and now it was too late! He could never hope to have the time granted him, to amend his life. With agony he thought that he was dying without being saved, and with all his load of sin upon his head. Willie sunk down upon his knees and prayed for mercy. "Oh SAVIOUR of the world," he cried, "save me the greatest of sinners, for Thine own dear sake." Might it not be possible, he thought, that he was spared a sudden death, that he might have time for repentance? The good-

ness of GOD was so great, and He was so grieved that any should perish, that, perhaps, even Willie's sins, (great as they were,) might be forgiven him, though at the eleventh hour. So Willie let his whole life pass before him, and prayed long and heartily to be forgiven for all he had done amiss; he hated the thought of his sin now so much, that he could scarcely fancy, if he were allowed to return to the living world again, that it could be any temptation to him to recur again to it; still he knew his own weakness, and how often his SAVIOUR had tried to open his heart in times past without being heard, he therefore prayed for the grace of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, without which he felt he could do nothing. He then became more calm, and softly said to himself a little hymn he remembered to have learnt at school.

" See at thy door I stand and knock,
Oh let Me enter in;
Turn not away from Me and mock,
I come to cleanse thy sin.

" I gently knock with pierced hand,
Hand pierc'd by sin of thine;
Let Me not thus so vainly stand,
I bring you grace divine.

" Your path is closed, and choked with weed,
My light shall clear the way;
Open to Me, My help you need,
Then night shall turn to day.

“ Your fruits lie waste, and heedless fall,
Collect them for the LORD ;
The Master calls, He needs them all,
Lend, then, to Him your hoard.

“ Locked is your rusted, rugged door,
And long I watch and wait ;
With love I call again once more,
Hear ! lest it be too late.”

The tears ran down Willie's cheeks as he remembered how often his SAVIOUR had knocked at his heart, and he had refused to open it to Him ; how many occasions of doing good he had wasted, and again little Mary's hungry eyes appeared before him as he had seen her when he passed her by in the morning without a word or look of help. Oh, for ten minutes upon earth to remedy this neglect ! but now it was too late.

He prayed again that for the love of CHRIST it might not be too late for repentance, and being quite worn out with all that he had gone through, he fell into a deep sleep which lasted he did not know how long, for night and day were alike in that dark place.

Poor boy, he awoke, suffering dreadfully from thirst, but though he tried not to think about it, visions of refreshing drinks would rise up before him, he seemed to hear the trickle of his mother's delicious tea as she poured it out into the cups ; and then he imagined himself standing by the river that

was rolling overhead, he saw the sunlight flicker upon its clear placid bosom,—what would he not give for one draught of its bright water ! he thought with horror of his sovereigns buried in the ground ; could they help him ? It astonished him now to think how he could be so infatuated and wicked as to worship such miserable trash, and he lifted his heart to his Heavenly FATHER for patience and resignation to His holy will.

As he lay on his back keeping quite still, and feeling very weak and faint, he heard a sound like the click of a pickaxe at a great distance ; he listened with startled ears, was it possible that God in His great mercy was going to spare him, to redeem his life ? But no, thought he, the sound was so far off, that it was not likely he should live until they reached him ; still he certainly heard the strokes of the pickaxe, but he became less and less able to listen, as the air of his prison was becoming exhausted, and he felt in a sort of dream, and knew nothing of what was passing, until he opened his eyes and saw his father bending over him, and heard his fervent, "Thank God !"

Mr. Hamilton stood near, and held a jug in his hand filled with hot broth, which he made him drink before they carried him home ; there everything was prepared for him, and his mo-

ther had warmed the bed, so that he soon fell into a refreshing sleep.

When Willie awoke late in the next day, his mother was watching him, and Mr. Hamilton was standing near; he felt weak, but quite clear as to what had happened to him.

"Oh, sir," he said to the clergyman, "thank God for me that He has spared me to repent, for I have been a grievous sinner."

Mr. Hamilton said a short but fervent prayer, and then he would not let him exert himself by talking until he had taken some breakfast, for he had remained a night and a day in that terrible mine, and consequently without food.

As soon as Willie was allowed to speak, he told Mr. Hamilton and his mother of the besetting sin of his life, and begged them to go at once and get his treasure out of the hole where it lay hidden. They soon found it, but he begged them not to bring it near him, as he could not bear the sight of it,—“it seemed like the price of his soul,” he said, and he besought Mr. Hamilton to bestow it all in charity, and first in relieving the wants of the poor Richards' family.

Mr. Hamilton consulted his mother, and rather demurred at spending so large a sum in this manner; he advised putting part of it in the savings' bank, to be ready for him in case of sickness or poverty; but Mrs. Jones wished

him to follow Willie's wishes in the matter, "it was his own money," she said, "and he had the right of doing what he liked with it; and if his conscience would be easier by giving the money away for the good of others, why, please God, she would not be the one to stand in his way."

So Mr. Hamilton went first to the Richards', and he found Richards himself better, and hoping to be able to work again in the following week, so he gave him seven pounds out of Willie's savings, which would enable him to get his furniture back, pay the doctor's bill, and set him straight with the world; and when he went away amidst the blessings of the whole family, he told Mary that Willie wanted to speak to her.

It was very touching when Mary came, to see the boy so humbly own his fault to her, and ask her to forgive him, and his shrinking away from the thanks she gave for all he had done for her family, as if it brought shame to him for such tardy kindness.

Next Sunday the Holy Communion was to be administered at Ashley Church, and Mr. Hamilton had often wished Willie to partake of this solemn rite, and had talked to him on the subject, but he had always put it off until a more convenient season. Now he was most anxious to receive it, and was only fearful of

his own unworthiness to draw near to the heavenly feast; but Mr. Hamilton reminded him that we are not to wait till we are perfect before we come, but that if God sees that we really desire to do what is right, and are in earnest in trying to forsake our sins, He bids us approach His Holy Table, and will give us a blessing there, and grace to help us for the time to come.

So Willie thankfully prepared himself for this great feast, and as he walked slowly to church between his father and mother, looking still very pale, and though serious, very calm and happy, many were the glances cast on him by the passers-by, who were curious to see the boy who had been buried alive and dug up again, while his friends pressed round him to shake hands and congratulate. This was almost too much for the poor fellow, whose heart was full to overflowing with its varied emotions, and he was thankful to find himself in Church, where the quiet and repose were very soothing; and when Mr. Hamilton read the Thanksgiving Prayer in a voice that trembled with deep feeling, adding the especial clause of praise and thanksgiving from Willie "for God's late mercies vouchsafed unto him," an irrepressible sob burst from the poor boy's heart, as he thought of the goodness of his SAVIOUR in delivering him from "the valley

of the shadow of death;" and remembered those blessed words which seemed as if addressed to him, "This my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found;" and he resolved that his life so spared, should be henceforth devoted to his Master's service.

The impression thus made was never obliterated; as soon as he was able to work again, he begged his mother to take charge of his wages, and buy what she thought he wanted with them, but not to ask him about the disposal of his money. He always reserved a tenth part, which he spent every week in charity, and when his friends wondered he could spare so much, he laughed, and told them he never missed it.

His great pleasure was in helping others, so that if anybody wanted anything done, he was told, "Go to Willie Jones, he will help you." He gave a great deal of his spare time to Richards and his family, working in their garden for them, and making their cottage comfortable. His money had come to them just at a time when it was most useful, they were able to get back their furniture, and returning health brought back work again, so they and their cottage soon presented as different a picture as can be imagined from the sad day of Willie's accident.

In the winter evenings he taught Mary

Richards to write, and he read many instructive and interesting books with her, and as she was a quick clever girl, and had a retentive memory, she made such good progress, that in a few years, when the old village schoolmistress died, Mr. Hamilton considered her sufficiently educated to take her place; and in due time she and Willie, or rather Mr. William Jones, as he was then called, were married, and a very happy couple they were.

It was a great pleasure to me to look in upon them of an evening after his work was over, he appeared so bright and fresh in his neat clean garments, for he was always very particular in his dress,—his idea was, that if the body was dirty and slatternly, it was often a sign that the soul was also in an untidy state,—and he generally had a rose, or some other flower in his button-hole, this was rather a rarity in those black regions, where the coal dust destroys vegetation. Then he had such a genial smile, that it did one's heart good to see it, and a pleasant joke, or a kind story to tell of somebody. I used to say one felt in better humour with oneself and the world in general, after talking to him.

His wife sat by sewing, she was a nice looking woman, but was quieter than her husband, and smiled gently at his lively sallies. She had the care of the purse, as he still refused to

have anything to do with money, but as she was very prudent, she, very likely, managed better for him than he would have done for himself; and he used to laugh and tell a good story of his wife buying a pig at a wondrously cheap rate at the neighbouring market, and how the vendor said "he would rather by half deal with a man than a woman, for the latter were so hard at a bargain," while all the time she fancied that she was being imposed upon. "But now," he added, "Mary knows what she ought to give for a pig, and gives it willingly."

They still kept to their old custom of giving away the tenth of their income every week, but they did not restrict themselves to this sum, if there was any great distress around them, or people who required help.

William and Mary have half a dozen fine, healthy, well-principled children, and the only time he is strict with them is when he sees any tendency to greediness, or fondness for gain in their minds. He will then very seriously tell them of his own youth, and they are never tired of hearing the tale of his awful adventure, nor will the moral ever be forgotten by them. He usually ends his narration with the old adage, "Remember, children, how true it is, that *the love of money is the root of all evil.*"



TO SWEAR BRINGS CARE.

Third Commandment.

"Guard well your lips, and keep your tongue
From every idle word,
When at God's throne, trembling you stand,
They all shall then be heard."

" H, mother," cried little Lucy, running into the cottage, "as I came from school, and passed Mr. Blay's shop, there were some boys playing marbles round the corner; John Carter was among them, and as a gentleman walked along, he knocked some of the marbles out of the ring, and when he had gone a little way off, you cannot think what bad language John used, he swore so much, that I was quite frightened."

"It is very sad, my dear," said Mrs. Grey, "and I have been often very much shocked to hear him take God's Name in vain in the way he does; but we must not be hard upon him,

as his mother is a great invalid, and I fear will not be long here, and his father sets him a very bad example. I am going to see what I can do for Mrs. Carter presently, and then I will try if I can get a quiet talk with John, and advise him to leave off this dreadful habit of his."

"Mother, is there any fear of my falling into this sin?" inquired Lucy.

"Indeed there is," answered Mrs. Grey, "for though I trust you may never be tempted to use bad language, like poor John, yet there are several ways of breaking the Third Commandment,—one is the repeating our prayers without thinking of what we are saying, we then take God's Name in vain."

"I am afraid I very often do that," said the little girl, "it is so difficult to keep one's thoughts from wandering during prayers, and noticing who is in church, and how people are dressed."

"I know it is, my darling, and that is why at the end of the commandment we pray God to 'have mercy upon us;' we also pray that He will forgive us the sin of drawing near to Him with our lips, while our hearts are far from Him. We must do our best to pray worthily, but not until we reach Heaven can we hope to offer perfect praise, without hindrance and without ceasing."

When Mrs. Grey and her family had finished their tea, she let Lucy wash up the tea-things, and whilst her husband smoked his pipe, she went to Mrs. Carter's house to see how she was, and whether she could do anything for her.

She found poor Mrs. Carter very ill, the weather had become colder, and her cough was very troublesome, while the feverish brightness of her eyes, and the hectic colour on her cheeks told of consumption in its last stage. She was sitting alone, and shivering over the dying embers of a small fire; Mrs. Grey persuaded her to go to bed, and made her a basin of warm gruel, which seemed to do her good. But Mrs. Grey saw how anxious she was for the return of her husband and son,—the latter soon made his appearance, and looked very sheepish when he saw Mrs. Grey sitting by his mother's bedside. He said he was sorry he was so late, but he had been listening to some splendid music at the public-house, where his father then was, and forgot how time went.

Mrs. Grey did not find fault with him while in his poor mother's room, but when he lighted her down stairs, she took that opportunity of reminding him how very ill his mother was, and that she would not be spared to him much longer upon earth, therefore he ought to try to

make the short time she remained here more comfortable to her. John seemed to feel what she said very deeply, and promised to attend to it, and then she ventured very gently to take him to task for his bad words, which she told him would surely lead him to every thing that was wrong.

He said he knew it was not right to swear, he had unfortunately got into a habit of doing so when he was put out, but that he did not mean any harm by it. Then Mrs. Grey pointed out to him how hateful this sin was in God's sight, and that He would not hold him guiltless who committed it.

She wished John good night with an aching heart, feeling that it was almost hopeless for the boy to try to do right with such an example as his father's always before him.

The next morning, as soon as her husband was gone to his work, and the children to school, Mrs. Grey went to Mrs. Carter's cottage to see how she had passed the night.

Poor Mrs. Carter was much worse, she was in bed, in fact, she did not seem able to get up; the tears were running down her thin cheeks, and she breathed with great difficulty.

"How kind this is of you to come to me," said the poor woman, "you find me but a feeble creature this morning; I feel so weak

that I have not energy to move, indeed I do not think I shall be long here to trouble any one."

"What have you had for breakfast?" asked Mrs. Grey.

"I have not tried to get any this morning," said Mrs. Carter, "my husband went out early and took John with him; they did not know I was so ill, or I dare say they would have made me some tea first."

Mrs. Grey was quite shocked to hear^d this, she went down stairs, but there was no fire in the grate, it evidently had not been lighted that day, so she ran home, and quickly warming some of the broth she had prepared for dinner, she brought it to Mrs. Carter, who drank it very gratefully, and it seemed to revive her a little, though Mrs. Grey saw plainly from the change there was in her face that she was dying, and that she would soon be far removed from the sufferings and privations of this life.

Gradually she drew from the poor invalid the sad history of the night before; it seemed that her husband had returned home intoxicated, and was very angry at finding her in bed, and the fire out; he made her get up and light one, to toast him some cheese; so she got very chilled, and did not sleep all night from pain in her chest.

"He knows no better," she said, "when he has taken that dreadful drink he is like one beside himself, and he does not believe that I am dying." "I shall be very glad when it pleases God to take me," she added after a pause, "but it makes me very anxious to think of leaving my boy; who will lead him in the right way, and try to save him from wicked company when I am gone?"

"Dear Mrs. Carter," said Mrs. Grey, "if it will make your mind more easy respecting John, I will promise to do what I can for him, and to guide and warn him as if he was my own son, and, please God, I will do my best that he may meet you in heaven."

"Thank God for those blessed words of yours," exclaimed Mrs. Carter in a low voice, "you have taken a great load from my heart."

Mrs. Grey seeing that her friend was very tired, left her for a time, advising her to try and have a nap whilst she went home to get the dinner ready, and to receive the children when they came back from school; but amidst their merry faces and lively prattle, she could not forget the poor woman she so lately left lying so pale and sad upon her dying bed, with no one near her, and her husband, who should have watched over her last moments, wasting all his time, his strength, and his money in intemperance. It was a sad picture!

even the boy seemed to bring no hope or comfort.

As soon as she could get away from the duties of her family, she returned to Mrs. Carter, and found her still nearer her end; her boy was kneeling down by the side of the bed, and her husband was sitting at a table near, with his head buried in his hands, the poor woman's eyes were closed, and her face looked beautiful in its calm serenity; she opened her eyes when Mrs. Grey entered, and beckoning her to approach, she begged her to bring John nearer to her, Mrs. Grey drew him close to the pillow, and then Mrs. Carter took his hand and placed it in that of her kind friend.

"My dearest boy," she said, "Mrs. Grey has promised to be a mother to you when I am gone, you must attend to what she says, and leave off bad words, and obey her in all things, and I pray God to bless you, and to lead you to His kingdom."

She then became very faint, so that Mrs. Grey was obliged to fan her, and put a spoonful of wine between her lips. After which she remained very quiet for some time, she then turned her head to where her husband was still sitting, (for, alas! he had been drinking again that morning, and was still somewhat stupified,) and holding out her hand, she bid him farewell.

"I die happy, my dear husband," she whispered very softly, "and I hope you will forgive any thing you have seen amiss in my conduct, as freely as I forgive any seeming unkindness on your part, for I know if it had not been for that terrible drink, you would never have been forgetful of me, and I entreat my blessed SAVIOUR to guide you in the right way, and to forgive us all our sins, that we may both be accepted hereafter."

He appeared much affected, and seated himself by her, still holding her hand, when he started in alarm, for a shadow passed over her face, and with a happy smile, as if a vision of angels appeared before her, her spirit floated away to the realms of the blessed, and her troubles and sorrows were ended for ever.

Carter was very much overcome, his wife's death was so unexpected to him, that he could hardly believe that he would have no opportunity of proving his remorse for his past unkindness, and making her life happier than he had done. Mrs. Grey tried to persuade him to come to her house and spend the evening with her family, but he said he would rather be alone, and begged her to take his boy with her. So after performing the last kind offices for her poor dead friend, she took John's hand and led him to her cottage. She talked to him about his mother as she walked along,

and of her goodness, and present happy state, so that by the time they reached Mrs. Grey's house, his sobs had ceased, and he was calm, though very grave.

When Mrs. Grey opened the door, what a bright scene presented itself; the eldest little girl had been trusted to make the tea in her mother's absence, and was sitting in great pride and dignity before the board, upon which were placed the shining teapot, and all the showy teacups and saucers, a cheerful fire was blazing in the grate, and by the side of it, in the large arm-chair, was seated the father with the youngest child on his knee; the little thing was trying to talk, and had managed to say something very funny, at which all the party were laughing heartily, the two middle children had a book of pictures which they were admiring together on the floor, but when they saw their mother come in, they all ran to her with one accord to give her a noisy welcome.

She stopped them quickly, and pointing out John to them, she told them they must be very quiet, for that he was in great trouble; and it was very pretty to see them hush their mirth, and pay him those little thoughtful attentions, which show that people have a regard for the feelings of others. They gently placed a stool for him near their mother,

which was their own favourite place, and generally there was a grand scramble for this seat of honour, the occupant having often to be decided upon by lot; but this night they evaded all contention in favour of the poor little stranger, they handed him the sweetest cup of tea, and gave him the slice of bread that had the most butter upon it; even the youngest child toddled up to him with a sweetie, a great red shining "bull's-eye," which had been given to him that day, and he made John understand that he was to suck it, and he would find it very nice. Then they showed him the book of pictures, and altogether John thought it the most happy home he had ever heard or read of. Mrs. Grey took him back to his father's cottage at nine o'clock, intending to have a little talk with the latter, and to try to make some impression upon him while his wife's death was so fresh in his memory; but sad to tell he was gone again to the public-house, his compunction for his past conduct was more than he could bear, so he went to drown it in the cup which brings ruin and misery to the soul. Mrs. Grey heard John say his prayers, and saw him safely in bed before she returned home, which she did with a sad heart, feeling how difficult it would be for her charge to keep in the straight path, when every tendency around him was calcu-

lated to draw him in a different direction. But after a prayer for guidance she lay down to rest, peacefully and trustingly, knowing that God would dispose everything for the best, and would give His blessing on all honest endeavours after right. She was deeply grateful for her own happy lot, and for a kind husband, to whom she could go for advice and help.

Carter seemed rather improved for a short time after his wife's death, he remained several evenings at home, and Mrs. Grey hoped he was going to turn over a new leaf; but he found his house dull, and soon returned to the "Swan with Two Necks," taking his son with him, who enjoyed the noisy time spent there in spite of his higher aspirations, and Mrs. Grey's entreaties to come to her cottage instead.

John was made a good deal of at the public-house, as he had a fine voice, and could sing a good song; though not of the most refined description. He could use as many bad words there as he liked, without being found fault with, or looked grave upon; in fact he was admired for his loose talk, interspersed with a few oaths, and they called him a free-spoken boy and a lad of spirit, which flattered his vanity, and they strongly advised him not to listen to Mrs. Grey, and become a "molly-

coddle." Poor John ! you will say, was in a bad way ; and, indeed, you would think so if you saw him among his wretched companions, playing cards until eleven o'clock at night, and listening to, and even joining in the tipsy songs around him.

One night he remained at the "Swan " until it closed, and then left it with some of the disreputable youths who frequented the place. His father was rather more intoxicated than usual, and stumbled as he came down the steps of the public-house. The young men who were with John laughed. "He will be some time getting home," they said, "come with us, and let's have a lark."

"I don't care if I do," replied John, who had been given quite as much beer as did him good, and a little over, (here he slapped out an oath,) "my dad will be poor, dull company for a moonlight walk to-night, and I had much rather have yours."

"Come, come," the eldest boy cried, "you're a lad of spirit, we shall make something of you yet, and what we admire in you most is, your racy pungent way of talking ; you are not squeamish like many youngsters who are afraid of a little free speech, as if they expected it to knock them down."

John was silly enough to be flattered by this praise. The boys were three years older

than himself, and were up to any sort of mischief, or indeed sin, so that he thought a great deal of them, and imagined they must be very fine fellows. They had been caught poaching upon Squire Tirrell's preserves on one occasion, and instead of sending them to prison he had them flogged, as being he thought the more merciful punishment in the end; but strange to say, they took a violent dislike to the flogging, and bore a grudge to the Squire in consequence.

The party now strolled in the direction of one of Mr. Tirrell's farms, and the eldest boy (Joe Martin,) proposed that they should all have a pipe together. This was what John particularly disliked, as smoking gave him a headache, and made him feel very sick and uncomfortable. However he was ashamed to make any objection, for fear of not being thought manly; so they all sat down under the shelter of a wheat-rick, as the wind was blowing rather high; and John drew forth with some pride a new match-box he had lately bought filled with scented matches. They all three lighted their pipes, and smoked away for some time.

"I'll tell you what I intend doing to-night," said Joe Martin, at last; "I know a place where a number of Squire Tirrell's fat pheasants roost, and I shall take a net and catch

a good many of them, without making any noise, and put them in a donkey-cart at once, and have them at Burton and sell them, and pocket the money before the Squire is out of his bed in the morning." (I purposely omit the oaths with which the speeches were larded, thinking it more agreeable to do so.) "Who will be the lad to join me?" continued Joe; "who will have the pluck to share the risk, and the fun of sharing the money too?"

"I'm your man for one," cried Harry Smith; "what do you say, John?"

But what with the beer John had been drinking, and the smoking which did not agree with him, he felt so qualmish and all-overish, that he was almost too far gone to decide upon anything. He fixed his lacklustre eyes upon his companions, and declared he was ready to join them in whatever they were going to undertake, while he was slyly knocking out the contents of his pipe with his boot, on the other side of him, that they might not notice what he was doing. But he had hardly got the words out of his mouth, before all the three boys jumped up with the speed of lightning, for the great heap of straw upon which they were sitting had caught fire, and in a moment was in a blaze. The flames darted high into the air, and were blown against the rick; and before they had

recovered from their first surprise this was also on fire. The scene now was awful, the flames roared and crackled, and shot up with bright sparks into the sky, the whole yard seemed on fire. The boys looked in a helpless way at one another.

"Oh, John, what have you done?" said Harry Smith.

"Come, it won't do for us to be found here," exclaimed Joe Martin, "we must be off, or we shall all be transported."

At these words away the boys all ran in different directions. John flew, rather than ran home, as fast as his legs could carry him. He seemed to hear the noise of the fire, and people calling to him to stop; but he never paused for a moment, or looked behind him, until breathless he reached his father's cottage.

He opened the door softly, and to his surprise he heard some people talking in the kitchen. He supposed his father must have brought some friends home with him, so he thought he could creep up to bed without being seen. He slept in the same room with his father, and when he reached it he was astonished to see his father in bed, apparently fast asleep, and a candle was burning upon a table at the bottom of the bed; he concluded that the kind neighbours downstairs had placed him

there finding him so very intoxicated that he could not help himself: but he observed that his father's face was covered with a handkerchief; this he could not understand, as he knew it must be a good thing for him to have as much air as possible, so he drew the handkerchief aside, and upon doing this he uttered a frightful scream, that echoed through the cottage, and then he fell down in a fit, for it was a corpse he looked upon—it was the white, cold, dead body of his father.

The neighbours all ran up stairs when they heard the shriek, and raised John from the ground, and after bathing his face with cold water, he recovered his senses, and then they explained to him that his wretched father, being very tipsy when he left the public-house, could not walk straight, and as he was crossing a bridge on his road home he reeled on one side, and fell into the water, where he was found a short time afterwards quite dead.

John's anguish was extreme, he felt like a murderer, for he knew that if he had walked home with his father this terrible accident would not have happened; and then there was the hideous fire, which at that very moment was raging outside. What was to be done? what would become of him? He wished to run away, but this he could not do as long as so many people were watching him, so he

resolved to bide his time, and, as soon as possible, to make his escape from these horrible scenes.

His kind friends made him get into bed, and one woman sat up with him all night, when she saw how pale and haggard he looked ; indeed he could not have remained by himself in the dark, and in that room too, without losing his senses, for he seemed to be continually lifting the cloth from his father's dead face, and seeing the stiffened features appear from underneath it. Then he fancied himself setting fire to ricks, and there was a grand hue and cry after him, and he was flying for his life, like a mad dog. Such dismal scenes continued during all that long night, until towards morning he was so exhausted that he fell into a troubled sleep, from which he was awakened by the coroner and jurymen coming to investigate the cause of his father's death ; and John was obliged to get up to give his evidence as to when he saw the miserable man last.

The coroner blamed John severely for allowing his father to walk home by himself in the state he was in, and at that time of night, but the jury returned a verdict of "accidental death," and then they began speaking of the dreadful fire there had been the night before when two valuable ricks were entirely destroyed, and no one had as yet been able to find out

how it had happened. "It is thought," said one of the party, "to be the work of an incendiary, and if so, they will be sure to catch him, and then he will be transported beyond seas, and serve him right too, for destroying the corn that might have fed many poor families."

John listened to this with agony, his knees shook under him, and at this very moment a policeman opened the door, and walking straight up to poor John, he put his hand upon his shoulder. "You must come with me, young fellow," he said, "and tell the magistrates what you were about last night."

John's face, if possible, grew whiter, and he cried, "I did not mean to do it, indeed, indeed, it was an accident."

"I advise you, my fine young chap, to say nothing until you are questioned; it strikes me that the less you chatter in this business the better for you."

This was the policeman's counsel as he led John away.

When John was taken before the magistrates they were going to examine him upon oath, when one of the gentlemen said, "It is no use for him to take an oath, for he so continually breaks the Third Commandment that we cannot believe a word he says." This told very much against him, and when they asked him

where he was the night before, what time he left the public-house, who were his companions, and where they went, the answers condemned him at once, and he prevaricated so much that there was no alternative, but to send him to prison to take his trial for setting Mr. Tirrell's ricks on fire.

Joe Martin and Harry Smith both turned against him: they declared that he set the rick on fire, that he slyly knocked the ashes out of his pipe into the straw, and his match-box being found in the yard, with his name written underneath it, corroborated their statement, though John was now so afraid of committing himself after the policeman's warning that he would not own having anything to do with the fire, even by an accident, and his falsehoods did him much harm in the estimation of the magistrates and the people present.

So the policeman walked him off to the county gaol, and no one pitied such a hardened, lying boy, while Mr. Tirrell was respected by all as a good and kind man, very considerate of his tenants, and never forgetful of the poor.

Mrs. Grey was working at a house some distance off on the day of these sad events, so she did not hear of what had happened until she returned home in the evening. The next

day, as early as possible, she started to walk the four miles to Burford, to see John.

When she was shown into the cell where he was confined, she saw only what appeared to be a heap of clothes huddled together in a corner. This was the unfortunate boy, his knees up to his head, and his face buried in his hands. At first he was very sullen, and would not speak, but she put her hand upon his shoulder, and talked to him very kindly, and reminded him of his mother's last words, and of her own promise to stand by him in her place as much as was in her power. At last he looked up, "Why don't you go away from such a wretch as I am?" he said, "every body forsakes me, and now I am put in prison for no fault of mine."

Mrs. Grey took his hand, and made him sit down by her, while she gently showed him where he had been wrong, and the wickedness of telling falsehoods in order to try to get out of the scrape. She was thankful to see that at last his heart became softened, and he burst into tears, and told her exactly how the dreadful fire had happened, "and, oh, Mrs. Grey," he added, "there is my father's frightful death to answer for, if I had only gone home with him he would have been alive now. I feel like an outcast, whom every one will point at and shun."

"I am very sorry for you, my dear John," said Mrs. Grey, "but you must expect to receive punishment for your sin, and to feel remorse for a long time; if you had not taken God's Name in vain these wretched companions would not have clung to you, and if you had spoken the truth without prevarication you would not have been here now, for the gentlemen would have believed your word of its being an accident."

When it was time for Mrs. Grey to go, poor John could hardly bear to wish her good-bye, it seemed so pleasant to have any one near him who cared for him, and tried to lead him right; but she promised to come again soon, and every other day while he remained in prison she managed to go and see him. She took her work with her, and talked to him kindly but very seriously, so he became very fond of her, and resolved that with God's help he would fight against and overcome his besetting sin.

When the time of his trial came he told the whole truth, without disguising his faults, so after being reprimanded for his carelessness, he was discharged.

Mrs. Grey remained in court until the end of the trial, and then took John home with her. She had asked her husband if he would allow the poor boy to live with them altogether.

"You know, dear," she said, "I promised his dying mother to watch over him, and I am afraid if he is left to himself or goes to the workhouse he will be exposed to temptations which he will not be able to resist, and he is a good boy to work, and will soon be able to support himself, I dare say, without being a burden upon you."

"Well, wife," he answered, "I can have no objection to the plan if you have none, I hope I may always have the bit and the sup to give him; but you must remember that all the additional trouble will fall to your share."

"Oh, I am not afraid of that," she said cheerfully, "if he turns out well, as I trust may be the case, I shall then be well repaid for a little extra patching and mending."

So it was agreed between this good couple that the poor, friendless orphan should find a home with them, and they treated him exactly as if he was one of their own children; Mrs. Grey told him to call her "mother," and watched over him with the greatest care, that he should not fall into his old bad ways, and John felt a warm affection for her, and for the whole family.

The happy, cheerful home, where all hearts were united, and each one seemed to be trying to make himself or herself more worthy to enjoy the blessings showered upon them,

appeared to John like a heaven upon earth ; instead of the father of the family spending all his evenings at a public-house, and leaving the house dull and desolate, with the prospect of his returning either helplessly intoxicated or quarrelsome, and ready to find fault with every thing ; instead of this miserable state of things Grey was the life of the party, he heard his children read out of some interesting books that he borrowed from the lending library in the village, and when they were tired he read to them himself, and explained every thing nicely to them as he went along, for he was a very good scholar. Then for a change he would encourage the children to sing some of the songs they had been taught, such as " Home, sweet home," " There's no luck about the house," " Those evening bells," and such like. It was very funny to hear the youngest little child try to lisp out, " Britannia rules the waves," and " Cherry ripe," and John could be a great help in the singing way, his good ear and voice added much to the harmony, and as soon as he could forget the bad songs in which he had been used to take pleasure, he quickly caught the new tunes, and found them so much more really merry and full of life, that he wondered he could ever have taken delight in the silly and even wicked songs of former evil days.

John's old companions tried hard to get him into their set again, and when they found fair words would not do, they tried rough ones; "gaol bird," "milk-sop," "molly-coddle," "who fired the rick?" "what have you done with your oaths?" were some of the agreeable remarks hallooed after him whenever he passed through the village. At last John came to Mrs. Grey with his cheeks on fire, asking her what he ought to do.

"Do nothing, my dear," she said, "think whether you deserve their taunts, and that will enable you to endure them bravely, and if you take no notice, and show them that you are in earnest in your efforts after amendment, they will soon get tired of molesting you."

He had the courage to follow her good advice, and found her words come true.

But I ought to tell you that a short time after John was released from prison Mrs. Grey took him to Mr. Tirrell, that he might own to him how very sorry he was for the mischief he had done in setting the ricks on fire, and to beg for forgiveness. Mr. Tirrell was so much pleased with his manner, and thought him so much improved that he determined to give him a chance to amend, and to be a help to his kind foster-mother, so he told him that he would try him to work in his garden, under the gardener's direction; and it was a proud

moment to John when at the end of the week he carried his wages to Mrs. Grey, and could feel himself not quite such a useless member of the family.

There was another boy named Robert Barnes, who was also employed in Mr. Tirrell's garden. He was jealous of John's being taken to work there, and of his receiving praise for industry and quickness, and he showed his spite by calling him "swearer," and "liar," and other bad names, and refusing to hold any intercourse with him.

One day John asked him some question when the gardener was near, who, finding Robert did not reply, asked if he did not hear John speak.

"Yes," said Robert, "but father told me not to have anything to say to one who takes God's Name in vain, for fear I should learn to do the same."

"I'll tell you what it is," replied the gardener, "we ought not to remember other people's offences for ever; I have not heard him utter one bad word since he came here, and I hope he has left off such ways."

Soon after this was the Fifth of November, when there was a great bonfire on the village green, and Guy Fawkes, with an old stable lantern in his hand, a pair of cracked spectacles over his goggle eyes, and a hat without any

crown perched on the top of his crooked head, was to be burnt, in the midst of a grand explosion of squibs and crackers. John had just finished what he had to do in the garden, and was rushing off to join the noise and fun, when as he passed by the frames where all the young cuttings were placed, he was surprised to see them open. John knew that it was Robert's duty to close the frames, but he supposed, in the excitement of the fireworks, he must have forgotten all about them.

John felt that there would be a sharp frost that night, and he had learned enough of gardening to be certain that if the tender cuttings were left without protection they would all be killed, and then Robert's carelessness would be discovered, and he would be dismissed with ignominy. The thought crossed John's mind, should he still leave the frames uncovered? it was not his business to close them, no one would know even that he had passed that way, and then Robert had been so very unkind to him. He started, who was tempting him in this manner? Had not Mrs. Grey told him that we must forgive all injuries against ourselves if we hope our sins will be forgiven? So he instantly drew up all the glasses, and carefully placed the mats over the top of them, then with a light heart he joined the merry crowd on the green, and his shouts

were the loudest, and his squibs seemed to hop about quicker than those of any other boy that evening.

The next morning John went early to Mr. Tirrell's; the white frost lay upon the ground, sparkling and glistening, and made a pleasant crisping sound under his feet as he walked along.

When he reached the garden gate he saw Robert Barnes standing near, as if afraid of entering. "I cannot tell what I shall do," he exclaimed. "I was told to shut up the pits last night, and I forgot to do it, and now I fear the plants are all dead."

"They are all right," said John. "I passed by your frames as I went to the village yesterday evening, and seeing them open I closed them, as I knew you would wish it."

"Thank you, John," Robert cried; "this is, indeed, returning good for evil, and I hope you will forgive me for my rude ways to you, and that we may become friends."

So the boys shook hands heartily, and then ran to their work, their spirits raised for having got rid of an old grudge, and allowed "by-gones to be by-gones." John attended very carefully to all the directions of the gardener, and did exactly as he was told, so that in time he became very expert, and a first-rate hand at his business. He employed his evenings in

studying botany, and he made such good progress in his studies, that at the end of a few years, when the head-gardener's place became vacant at Mr. Tirrell's, he was able to undertake the situation. He kept Mrs. Grey's garden in beautiful order. They had the most lovely flowers, the earliest peas, the most tempting strawberries, the sweetest cherries, of any one in the parish; and John was able to get Mrs. Grey and her family many comforts which they would not otherwise have been able to enjoy. The shelf of books grew to a goodly length, and were a never-failing source of interest to the whole family. A vase of the freshest flowers stood on the chimney-piece at all times, summer and winter, red and white roses, and honeysuckle peeped in at the window, and with the bright faces in the room formed a very pretty picture. Lucy married the village carpenter, an industrious, steady, good man, and is as happy as she deserves to be. John did not marry as long as Mrs. Grey lived, he devoted himself to her, and loved her as if she was in very truth his mother. He felt he should have been an outcast for ever if she had not taken him by the hand, and saved him from his own wicked tongue, that unruly member, which brings forth blessings and cursings. Let us beware of bad words, for "by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned."



THE CONTRAST.

Fourth Commandment.

"Lead me, O LORD, Thy courts to love,
And teach me how to pray,
That I may join Thy choir above,
One endless Sabbath day."

"OOD morning, Mrs. Wilkins," said a clean respectable looking woman, opening the door of the cottage, and bearing in her hands a fine large pie, "you will set me down as a very vain woman, but as I went to the bake-house, I thought I would just step in and show you this pie, which we hope to have for dinner to-morrow; we enjoy a nice dinner on Sunday, and we all like to go to church, so by the help of the pie we can do both, and if you fancy it, I can make you one just like it."

It was truly a goodly pie, it was made in a round dish of portly dimensions, the crust at the edge was crimped in elegant waves, and in the centre stood up, what might by a stretch

of imagination be taken to be the representation of a handsome yellow rose.

"Thank you, Mrs. Foster," replied her acquaintance, "it is a very nice looking pie, but we prefer something rather more tasty for our Sunday dinner, and I generally get a little bit of meat to roast, or a savoury fry, or such like nice things."

"I assure you," said Mrs. Foster, "that my pie is not to be despised, (though I say it that shouldn't say it,) and it is not at all an extravagant dish either; I get the butcher to let me have two pounds or so of the trimmings off different sorts of meat, which I can buy at sixpence the pound, and as there is no bone to it, there is no waste, and if any of the meat is hard or gristly, I stew it gently first in a closed saucepan, with a little water, and plenty of pepper, herbs, and seasoning, then I put it all in the dish, and fill up with some boiled potatoes, carrots, and whatever vegetables are in season; also two or three apples cut in slices, we find a great improvement,—a lady told me once that this is an addition that is made in Wales, where they call it a 'squab pie,' and very good it is."

"I dare say it is very good," said Mrs. Wilkins, "but my husband likes something hot on a Sunday, so I must not disappoint him."

"This can be easily warmed before the fire, or in the oven," answered Mrs. Foster, "but this summer time we generally like it best cold; however, if I cannot tempt you to let me make you a pie I must wish you good-bye, or I shall be too late for the baker's oven."

Mrs. Wilkins dawdled away the rest of the day, and had just cleaned the house, and was gone to the butcher's to purchase her bit of savoury meat, when her husband and his two sons returned home, the roads were very dirty, and they carelessly forgot to clean their shoes before they entered, so that when Mrs. Wilkins came back, there were the untidy marks of their feet all over the floor of her freshly cleaned kitchen. It was certainly very provoking for her, poor woman, and enough to make her angry, but she was angry above cause and reason, and scolded right and left, so that her husband said "he should not remain in such an uncomfortable noisy home, he should go to the more quiet public-house, where he might walk across the room without being flown at."

So away he went, and Mrs. Wilkins was left to the companionship of two sulky boys, and her own thoughts, which were not pleasant; she felt that she had driven her husband away by her hasty temper, and that he was now spending his time and money in drinking

more beer than was good for him, and in making bad acquaintances. But instead of lifting up her heart to God for help, and resolving to do better for the time to come, and then doing the best she could do under the circumstances, and cleaning the house again, and getting up a bright face against her husband's return, she ordered the boys to bed, which feat was not accomplished without a scuffle, and afterwards sat down to brood over her wrongs, and imagine the sharp things she should say to her husband when he returned. He did not come home until past eleven o'clock, when he was turned out of the public-house, and then he was in such a jolly state, that all her smart sayings she saw would be worse than useless, and she was obliged to go to bed, and to help him to do the same, with her angry passions unsatisfied.

How different is Mrs. Foster's household ; they went to sleep with happy, thankful hearts, and awoke early the next morning, feeling glad to think that it was Sunday, bringing all its privileges and blessings with it.

Mrs. Foster rose betimes that she might not be hurried or discomposed in getting through her duties before church time ; at eight o'clock they all assembled for breakfast, the children as clean as soap and water could make them, their shoes and dress without a speck, and

every thing around them bore witness to the old saying, that "cleanliness is next to godliness;" the table-cloth was as white as snow, and the large loaf of home-made bread looked very inviting, standing on its wooden platter, as did also the fresh gathered watercresses which were to give it a relish. And this morning being Sunday, they were allowed the rare luxury of fresh butter; so after the father had said a short prayer, they set to work at their breakfast, with great spirits and greater appetites, the parents laughed at their children's merry sallies, and small attempts at wit, for they liked to encourage their innocent enjoyments; the only sort of talk they put a stop to was idle gossip, and severe censure upon their neighbours.

"You know, my dears," Mrs. Foster would say, "we should not like to pass by a house, and hear our acquaintances speak harshly of our faults; supposing they made a long story of one of us being greedy, another being lazy, and so on, should we not think it very unkind of them? so as we have plenty of faults ourselves, let us not be hard upon those of other people, but try to do to them as we wish they should do to us."

After breakfast the two boys and the little girl went to school, which they would not have missed for the world, as the clergyman

made it pleasant to them ; he did not set them to learn dry lessons on a Sunday, but he heard them say hymns and the Catechism, and encouraged them to ask him questions about any thing they did not understand, and then he made all their difficulties clear in such a pleasant manner, that they could not forget what he told them. Sometimes Miss Marchmont, the Rector's daughter, would read to them a little story on the Collect for the day, or the Epistle, or Gospel, which would impress it upon their memories, and be a nice subject for them to talk upon in the evening.

After Mrs. Foster had put away the breakfast things, she joined her husband in the garden, who was smoking a pipe in an arbour he had made, covered with roses and all sorts of sweet climbing flowers ; she brought a book with her that Mr. Marchmont had lent her, and sometimes she read out to him a little, and then they conversed about what she had been reading, and then they listened to the glad song of the birds, and the busy hum of the bees, which knew not the difference between Sunday and other days, until the church bells began ringing ; at first they all chimed together, and seemed to Mrs. Foster to say, "It is time to dress for Church," and nearer eleven o'clock they changed, as she imagined, to "Come to Church, come to Church."

"You will be late, if you go on listening to your fancies," said her husband, so she ran to put on her things, and soon appeared in her clean print dress, with its little lilac sprig scattered all over it, a fair white shawl, that she had actually worn at her own wedding,—but it had been laid up in lavender ever since, and smelt of that fragrant herb, and it only made its appearance in public on summer Sundays, christenings, and such like grand days, so it was none the worse for wear,—this with a straw bonnet trimmed with lilac, completed her toilet, and with her brown hair neatly braided under her clean border, and her happy eyes, she formed as pleasant a picture as you would wish to look upon.

"Well, wife," said Foster, "to my eyes you seem as young and comely as you did when we were married, fifteen years ago."

"Ah, I suspect you are in want of a compliment to yourself, that you are so free with them to other people this morning," she answered with a bright smile, as she locked the house door, and putting the key in her pocket, she took his arm, and they proceeded to church.

On their road, Mrs. Foster said, "I was in hopes that Mrs. Wilkins and her family would have found their way to church to-day at last, but from the voices I hear in their house, I

fear we shall not see them there. How strange it seems that people should hear the church bells ring, Sunday after Sunday, month after month, and I might say year after year, and yet never think of going, never realize the idea that the call to prayer is for them, and that by refusing to listen to it, they virtually deny God, and disown that they are bound to obey His commands."

"Yes, dear, it is a dreadful thought," he replied, "but you must remember that generally speaking this state of things is not produced all at once; it comes on by degrees, first the tempter puts it into a person's head that he is too busy to go, that something may happen to the house whilst he is away, and that he ought to stay to see a friend, or that he is tired, or feels poorly, or is too miserable, or in trouble, so he remains at home; in the afternoon he is less inclined to move, and dozes away his Sunday over the fire; and the following Sunday it is much the same, and he gets thick with bad acquaintances, and they make their vicious plans for the Sabbath day, as a time when they shall be less seen, and not so likely to be found out; until a habit is formed which becomes second nature,—the Church seems to be no property or concern of theirs; prayers are irksome, and they live without God in the world. Let us pray that neither

ourselves, nor any one we love may ever come to this awful state."

By this time they had reached the Church, and joined in the services there with cheerfulness and devotion; their hearts attuned to love of God, and of their fellow men.

Mr. Marchmont preached a very good practical sermon, it was not long, but it was one that arrested their attention, and gave them something to think of on their walk home; the children too were quiet, which was a wonder for them, and tried to remember the text, and some little bits of the sermon which had made an impression upon them.

When they reached their home Mrs. Foster opened the door, and also the windows of the kitchen, to let in the refreshment of the sweet summer air, and of the scent of the flowers which flourished just outside; and then she produced from the larder the famous pie, which was received with a shout by the youngsters; and when their father had said grace they attacked the pie with great zest and admiration, until they made it look very foolish. Then the mother and her daughter, who was a neat-handed little Phillis, cleared away the things; and they all went into the garden, and sat in the arbour talking for a while, before it was time to go to church again: the conversation turned to the joys of Heaven.

"I suppose everybody hopes to get there at last," said Mrs. Foster, "even the most wicked man, who never prays, or goes near his church, or thinks of his SAVIOUR, has a wandering idea, that some day he shall repent, and he trusts be forgiven and received into CHRIST's kingdom. But even if he had his desire, would he be happy there? Would the man who disliked religion, and thought prayer a useless trouble, like to spend eternity in prayer and praise?"

"No, wife, certainly not," replied Foster, "we must prepare ourselves for the everlasting and happy life in Heaven, by trying to love GOD in His service here below. We must 'call His Sabbath a delight,' and 'worship Him in spirit and in truth.' Then may we hope to be able to join with His blessed angels in singing Hallelujahs before the throne of the LAMB for ever and ever. As a man dies so will he rise again, with the same sort of dispositions and aspirations he had upon earth, only purified from the dross of the world, and refined and made fit for GOD's service, and cleansed from all sin. But if he dies without seeking CHRIST his SAVIOUR, prayer being a useless form, and the LORD's day having been to him only a day of greater licence, when he has had more time for his worldly pleasures, what claim could he raise

to Heaven, or with what delight could he look forward to an eternity of LORD's days?

"But, wife, there are the bells ringing, go and put on your bonnet, we must not neglect our own prayers, while we find fault with other people."

After church they had a comfortable tea, and then they all took a pleasant walk together, as they generally did every summer evening. They bent their steps to-day towards the top of a high hill, which gave them a splendid view of the setting sun gilding the church spire, the houses clustering round, and all the little village below them, with a rosy light, the river too winding along reflected its lustre, so that their mortal eyes could not look steadfastly at the dazzling scene.

The little party sat down on the grass that they might admire the prospect at their leisure; and Foster reminded his children of the God of heaven and earth, Who made all things, and Who Himself pronounced them to be very good.

"I cannot help thinking," said his wife, as they rose to return home, "that if this world is so beautiful, what must be the loveliness of that happy country which is the dwelling-place of God Himself; for 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive' the glory

that shall be there revealed to those who love Him."

"True, dear wife," answered her husband; "and if it was permitted us for once, to compare with our own eyes the joys of Heaven with the punishment of Hell, I suppose there would be few, even among the worst of us, who would not afterwards make it the endeavour of his life to attain the former."

The father and mother walked along slowly, their thoughts occupied upon what they had been talking about; the children running races down the hill, and picking flowers and chatting gaily together until they reached their cottage, when they sat down to their supper of bread and cheese, with the accompaniments of a crisp lettuce and some radishes. This it was the children's part to provide for the Sunday entertainment, and it was a subject of emulation among them, as to which should grow the best salad out of the little slip of garden they called their own; even in winter they managed to produce endive, or fine white celery, which with beetroot was much relished by all the party. At nine o'clock the father read a prayer, thanking God for all His mercies, and praying Him to forgive whatever they had done amiss during the day, and to grant them His grace for the time to come; and then they lay down to rest, peace-

fully and trustfully, feeling that they were under the protection of One Who never slept, and Who would allow no evil thing to hurt them, nor any plague come near their dwelling.

We must now turn from this happy family, to see how Mrs. Wilkins has prospered during the Sunday. We left her in rather a bad humour, and I am sorry to say she did not awake in the morning in a very pleasant frame of mind. She felt tired from having been late the night before, and having had so much worry about her husband; so she resolved to remain in bed a little longer than usual, though she heard the children chattering to one another, and scampering about the house, and knew they would shortly be at mischief if they were left to themselves. She had just coaxed herself into a doze, when she was awaked to an unhappy consciousness again by a tremendous crash, which was followed by a clamour of tongues.

Mrs. Wilkins threw something over her, and ran down stairs. She found that the youngest boy had tried to reach the jug of milk, which was placed upon a high shelf above his head. He had clambered on a chair, and then on to the dresser; but his eldest brother coming quickly towards him, he had dropped the jug, the contents were spilt, and the jug broken of course.

Mrs. Wilkins was in a great rage, she gave them some sound boxes on the ear, at which the youngest child began to cry, and the eldest boy to threaten her in return, and amidst a terrible noise and vociferation—one child accusing the other—the unfortunate woman ordered the little girl to mop up the mess, and ran up stairs herself to shuffle on her clothes as fast as she could, that she might prevent a further, and perhaps, a worse mischance from occurring, for she felt there was no more rest for her that morning.

She came down, looking still very untidy, and made breakfast, but the milk, alas, was wanting to the repast. She could not persuade her husband to get up, he had not slept off the carousal of last night, so she took him a cup of tea, which seemed to refresh him, and presently he came down, seeming, even then, somewhat stupified, and he smoked his pipe all the time people were going to church.

Mrs. Wilkins, of course, stayed at home. She was very dirty, and so was the house, and so were the children. There was no hope of school for them, or church either. Then there was the grand dinner to cook, which was a lengthy business with all the children hanging about, and plaguing her, and worrying one another, and it was nearly two o'clock before

the bit of fat pork was roasted, and the potatoes done brown under it.

It certainly looked and smelled very inviting, but the father had not got his appetite back again, and still felt very head-achy and uncomfortable; the children were all in a bad humour, and ready to quarrel with everybody and everything; Mrs. Wilkins, poor woman, was very hot and tired, from all the worry she had gone through. The children became noisy and clamorous, and each wanted the best of all that was on the table, and one of the children threw his potatoe off his plate because it was not so big as his brother's. Their father ordered them all out of the house immediately for making such a riot, and the mother declared that she was cursed with the worst children in the world, forgetting that if she brought them up without the fear of God, or without caring for their souls, she ought not to be surprised if the evil spirits obtained the mastery over them.

When Mrs. Wilkins had cleared away the squabbled-over, unrelished dinner, she found it was past three o'clock, so she went up stairs to try to make herself a little tidy. When she came down her husband and children were no where to be seen. At last, after calling them in vain in the garden, her little girl came running along the lane, with her hair

hanging down her back, and her frock torn, saying that she had followed her brothers through the hedge, but that they had scrambled on to another before she could overtake them, and then left her behind.

Her mother scolded her for going out without her bonnet, and such a dirty figure. She said it was her mother's fault for not making her more neat, and then followed that sad, sad sight—recrimination between a mother and her child. At last they sat quite silent in the little room, that soft summer evening, the smell of the roast pork still redolent, and bad passions raging in their hearts.

At nine o'clock Mrs. Wilkins sent her daughter to bed, and waited anxiously for the rest of her family.

At last the boys arrived. Bill, the eldest, had a terrible black eye, and his nose was bleeding. It seemed that they had all been birds-nesting, and he had met Sam Fowler, who was a very quarrelsome fellow, and the boys had some words about some eggs, which each claimed as his own property; this led to a fight, and the black eye and bloody nose were the result. Mrs. Wilkins was very much annoyed, as she knew he could not go to work for two or three days. She was still more angry when she found his brother had sprained his wrist in getting down a high tree.

But the worst of all was to come in hearing from her husband, who reached home soon afterwards, that he had been spending the evening with Fred Bedford, who was notorious as being the worst character in the parish. If anything went wrong he was sure to be at the bottom of it—poaching, thieving, swearing, betting, gambling, all these names got tacked on to his by turns, and he richly deserved them all. That her husband should consort with him seemed more than she could bear, but it was no use to say anything; she attempted a little expostulation, but he said that a great many things were told of him that were not true; he had met him the evening before at a public-house, and thought him a good sort of fellow.

So the wretched day was over at last, and when Mrs. Wilkins lay tossing from side to side on her uneasy pillow, for she was too weary, more in mind than body, for sleep, she could not help thinking whether there might not be some truth in what Mrs. Foster had said, that if the Sunday was badly spent everything went wrong, for it was impossible for a household without godliness to be happy.

And let us ask ourselves which of these two pictures is most inviting? With which family would you rather spend the Sunday? I need not inquire; we feel at once where

God's blessing would rest, and that His grace would follow those who loved Him and kept His commandments; perfect peace would be their portion in this life, until it was time for them to enter into their FATHER'S Kingdom, where the golden harps they had longed' for upon earth would be delivered to them, that they might learn the new song to sing before the throne, which no man can sing but those who follow the LAMB whithersoever He goeth.

We will now pass over seven years, which are said to form an epoch in every person's life, and see how the two families have prospered since we last were introduced to them.

Mrs. Foster is just returning to her house, and quite a large party with her; they all look very smart. Mr. Foster has a fine white rose stuck in the button-hole of his Sunday coat, and Mrs. Foster has on that identical white shawl which she wore on the Sunday when we saw her last, at least, if not that one it is the *fac-simile*, but at all events it is as fresh as ever; her daughter, a pretty girl of nineteen, is walking with a good-looking young man, the son of the miller of the parish, who finding he had more work on his hands than he could manage comfortably, gave up one of his mills to his son, who thought he might now venture to aspire to the hand of pretty

Anne Foster, to whom he had been long attached.

Mr. and Mrs. Foster knew it was a good match for their daughter as far as money was concerned, but what they chiefly considered was, that he was a really religious, well-principled young man, so, as their girl loved him heartily, they gave their consent. "She is young to marry," Mrs. Foster said, "and I fear she does not know as much about house-keeping as I could wish, but I shall be very near her, and happy to give her as many hints as she likes to have." So this was their wedding day, and they were just come back from church, and were entering the house for the wedding breakfast.

We have seen that room look very pleasant before, so we can only say it appeared still more charming that morning; the walls and chimney-piece were adorned with flowers, as was also the table, upon which was spread a substantial and excellent dinner, with the cold piece of beef, fowls, cherry tart, and other dainties too numerous to mention. I must not forget though the fine sugared cake, which occupied the middle of the table, and which was the gift of the clergyman's daughter.

They were all very merry, and drank healths in some of Mrs. Foster's gooseberry wine, which all the company pronounced to be at least equal,

if not superior to, champagne, as in point of fact, I dare say was the case.

It was observed that Mrs. Foster's eldest son, who was now twenty-one and the post-master of the parish, was very sweet upon the nice, fresh-looking bridesmaid, the miller's daughter, and that his attentions appeared to give pleasure to the two families, so that it is expected that a return wedding will take place at the jovial miller's, at no very distant day.

After the dinner was concluded, the young couple started off in the miller's little four-wheel carriage, for the town of Goring, five miles from London, to spend a week of honeymoon there, enjoying the sights and exhibitions of that lively place before they took possession of their neat and pretty home.

After they were gone, the rest of the party went into the garden, and had tea in the arbour, and the miller spoke of the Fosters' children turning out so well. "I think it is chiefly owing, under God's blessing," he said, "to your care and watchfulness that they should spend the LORD's day in a proper manner, that is the day when all the idle boys and girls of a place congregate together, and waste their time in vanity and folly, which, if not checked, is sure to lead to vice; they think that Sabbath breaking is not a very hateful

sin after all, and that they are merely intended to amuse themselves on that day, while the offering up thanks and praise to God for all His mercies to them during the past week does not enter into their calculations."

"It is very kind of you, neighbour, to praise our children," said Mrs. Foster, "I do not know that they are better than others, though I suppose in our secret hearts we think there are none like them: but I quite agree with you that forsaking the worship of our heavenly FATHER in His own appointed house is generally the beginning of young people's ruin. I am very thankful that our young bride-folk who were married to-day feel the importance of public worship, and will endeavour to lead others to think with them on this subject."

The party soon afterwards broke up, and Foster and his wife retired to rest, commending their children to the care of the SAVIOUR of souls, and feeling that "come weal come woe" all would be safe and well if He watched over them.

It is now time to turn to Mrs. Wilkins, and see how she has gone on during the seven years we have lost sight of her.

We pass by her old cottage, but another family live there now; we must go on further until we come to the very outskirts of the parish, to a wretched hovel built on the edge

of the common that surrounded the village ; it has only one window, the broken glass of which is mended with paper. No curling blue smoke rises out of the tumble-down chimney, nor, though it was now quite dark, did any light shine through the open door of the hut. This was the wretched abode of Mrs. Wilkins : she, dirty, untidy, and haggard-looking, was standing at the door, watching for her husband's return. He was often late, so that it was nothing surprising that he should not be home now ; but she had a presentiment of coming evil which would not allow her to remain quiet. Her boys too were still absent.

She went inside the cottage, and lighted the last dip she had remaining, and placed it in the window, that it might be a guide to them all as they came wandering back to their miserable home.

She was often obliged to do this, as her husband had become a notorious poacher, and her sons also formed part of the gang ; they frequently had to fly home as they best might to escape detection, when the keepers were after them. The light therefore at the window was a great help to them when they were scampering across the country, and as soon as they had thrown their guns, game, and bludgeons into the carefully concealed hole prepared for them, the candle was put out, and they were

innocently sleeping when a search was made for the culprits.

They had so often escaped in this manner, that they were grown hardened in guilt, and even Mrs. Wilkins had ceased to be alarmed for their safety; to-night, however, the shadow of sad events weighed upon her spirits, and made her feel utterly miserable.

"What a dreadful lot is mine," thought she, "to be left alone all day, with hardly enough food to keep me alive, only this dreary hovel to cover me, and the daily fear of my husband and children being brought home to me corpses! What have I done, that I should be so cursed? First my husband took to poaching, then work failed him, and my little girl died, who might have been a comfort to me, and now it has come to this."

The poor woman covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly; but alas! she did not turn to Him Who alone could help her, and give her any comfort; she had so long neglected to worship her God, that she did not consider, that in all dangers and afflictions He can give succour and relief, if we pray to Him for it.

Mrs. Wilkins went into the cottage again, to trim the candle, which was burning very low in the socket. "Will they never come?" she thought, and then she restlessly walked out

into the air again, in fact she could not remain in that close little room, for her husband's ostensible employment was a collector of bones and rags, and a large sack of this fragrant and delicious compound of merchandise stood in one dark corner of the hut, the bed with its dirty, ragged quilt stood in another, and with a three-legged table, and a couple of stools completed the furniture of the apartment.

Mrs. Wilkins looked into the black darkness of the night, but she could see nothing; she listened intently, and thought she heard a scuffle of feet in the distance, the sound came nearer, it appeared to be several men hurrying along, but not running so fast as they generally did when they approached the cottage at times like the present; something seemed to impede their progress, what could it be? she saw her husband come in first, helping to drag in a dark object, his face was ashy white, and his eyes looked transfixed with horror; when they came within the room, and the light shone upon the form they carried, she saw that it was a dead body covered with blood, which still dropped from a wound in his side; and who can describe her feelings when the poor hanging head with its fixed open eyes met her view, and she saw revealed the features of her youngest son!

They placed him on the bed, and she undressed him, and washed his wounds, and

bathed his face with cold water,—but no life returned to his cold stiffening limbs, he was quite dead; so she closed his staring eyes, and then she turned round with an inquiring look to her husband and her other son, who were standing near, and watching her operations.

“We were shooting some pheasants,” the former said, in answer to her mute appeal for information as to the cause of this catastrophe, “and John went to pick up some birds, in the darkness we did not see where he was, and the gun went off, and, poor fellow, he was shot.” He did not tell his wife that *he* was the one who fired off the gun, he could not own to her that he had murdered her son. “Come,” he said, “it will not do for us to be found here, the keepers are alert, and are even now after us; we must not stay, or we shall be taken.”

At these words Fred Bedford and the other poachers rushed off, while Wilkins and his son poked their guns, and birds, and poor John’s bloody clothes in the hole in the floor of the little washhouse, which formed the other part of the hut, the mother all the time watching the door with a conflict of feelings that baffles description.

There lay the dead body of her youngest boy, who had just met with a sudden and violent death while in the commission of a crime, and there were her husband and her

only remaining child preparing for flight, she knew not where, or for how long, or what would become of her in the meanwhile, or how she should bury her poor boy.

After her husband and son had finished their hasty measures for hiding their black night's work, they sneaked out of the cottage, and instantly a bright light shone in their faces, and a policeman seized upon them.

"That is one of the men, I will swear to him," said two keepers who were standing close behind, and the father and son were brought back again into the hut, both handcuffed, for the son was also identified by the other keeper as being engaged in a terrible affray with the keepers a short time back, when one of the keepers was left for dead, and it was still feared whether he would ever recover; they had tried to discover the poachers ever since, but only this night had they managed to find a clue to the real criminals; they heard the shots fired, and watched the party enter the cottage, when they called a policeman, and were just in time to catch them before they made their escape.

What a dreadful scene was that in the hovel,—the father and son in custody, the mother in hysterics, and on the bed the dead body of her unfortunate son, just slain by his own father.

The blood on the floor betrayed that some horrible event had happened, and led them to follow the drops until they came to the hole in which all the unlawful tools and implements of their bad trade were concealed, and the wretched Wilkins and his son saw them discover the hiding-place, which had been successfully hidden for so long, and bring to light one by one, the guns, birds, and at last the bloody garments of the dead boy.

"I fear this is a very ugly business," said the policeman, "and we must have the coroner here to inquire into matters."

So the two Wilkins's were marched off to prison, and another policeman remained in charge of the dead body until the coroner came in the morning.

The village the next day was in a state of excitement, such as had never been witnessed there before. All the Wilkins's were examined as to the cause of John Wilkins' death, and at first it seemed doubtful whether the jury would not bring in a verdict of murder against the father; for the concealment of the clothes, and the evident intention of escaping from the hands of justice, were such very suspicious circumstances, in the opinion of the Court. However, the poaching business seemed sufficient to account for Wilkins' alarm, and for that of his son, this was clearly proved against them both, and they were taken to prison.

The trial took place not long afterwards, just before which time the poor keeper who was so beaten about by Wilkins and his son in the poaching skirmish, died of his wounds, so a verdict of manslaughter was brought against them both. The father was transported for life, and the son was let off with one year's imprisonment with hard labour.

Let us hope that their punishment led them to reflect upon the past, and brought them to feel how great their guilt had been. When Wilkins and his son were taken to prison, Mrs. Wilkins, wretched and heart-broken, was obliged to go to the workhouse, as she had no means of supporting herself now in her miserable hovel. Her poor son was buried by the parish, and a more melancholy sight could not be imagined than the poor woman in her rusty scraps of mourning, alone and childless, and worse than a widow, following the remains of her murdered boy to the grave. Houseless and friendless, without a hope for the future, or comfort in her remembrance of the past, she seemed alike forsaken by God and man.

Let us pray that we may have grace to love God, and keep His commandments, then we may be sure He will remember us in our sorrows and afflictions, for the LORD will not forsake those who love Him, and those who seek Him shall surely find Him.



THE COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE.

Fifth Commandment.

“ Who keeps what parents here command,
They long on earth shall live ;
And glory in that happier land
The God of life shall give.”

“  H, mother ! let me go to school by the fields,” exclaimed Ann Herbert ; “ it is so dull the road way, there are no stiles, or anything to amuse me.”

“ No, dear,” answered her mother, “ you do as I tell you, and go by the road ; after all the rain we have had, it is safer for you than the other way.”

Ann pouted, but did as she was bid, though with a very bad grace. She walked slowly along the stupid road, thinking how tiresome her mother was, and she was tempted to turn back and go the field way, in spite of her mother’s prohibition, when she saw in the

distance the lambs running about in the meadows, and the calves making themselves happy and running races one with another, whilst on the road there was not so much as a cart going by, to disturb the monotony of the straight ugly path ; it was very dirty too, which was an aggravation. She, however, did not turn back, for she thought it would make her so very late. But she reached school in a bad humour, and was put at the bottom of the class, because she did not know her lessons ; then she had to be kept back, when the others all went home to their dinner, to correct her sum, which she had been very careless over. This made her more sulky, and she still sat with her slate before her, when her schoolfellows returned at two o'clock, the picture of gloom and sullenness refusing even to look at the sum before her. The children were not allowed to come near the table where she was seated, but she heard them talking to one another in eager tones, of poor Sarah Smith, who in coming to school that morning across the fields had tumbled into the water, and been almost drowned. The river had overflowed its banks in the night, and the ditches and meadows were in many places covered pretty deep with water, and in getting over a stile her foot slipped and she fell into the deep ditch close by, which was full of water, as was

also the whole of the field surrounding it, so that the poor little girl struggled in vain to scramble out of her cold watery bed. She screamed loudly, and fortunately Farmer Tomkins was not far off, and hearing her cry he hastened to the spot and pulled her out, and ran with her to her home, where she was placed in bed, and it was hoped she would not materially suffer from her wetting; but she felt great pain in all her limbs, and they feared she had taken a severe cold.

The children all exclaimed, "If Farmer Tomkins had not heard her scream she must have remained there until now, and then she would have been drowned!"

Ann heard this with a start of horror; supposing she had followed her wish of going by the fields, and had tumbled into the water like poor Sarah Smith, and no one had heard her call for help, and she had died there with all her sins upon her head! Feeling herself to be the prey of so many evil passions, the idea of being suddenly called to appear before her Maker seemed dreadful to her, so she resolved to be a better girl for the future, and lifting up her heart for forgiveness and grace, she applied herself resolutely to the task before her, and soon discovered the fault in her sum. She found that it only required a little attention to see the mistake she had made, and to

rectify it. She finished the sum quickly, and then took it to the schoolmistress, begging her pardon for having been such a naughty girl. She bore a scolding and a bad mark put against her name with great patience, feeling how richly she deserved them both. She walked home slowly and sorrowfully, with her own bad temper and poor Sarah Smith's accident before her eyes. The road no longer seemed dull and ugly to her; it was filled with reflections on her own faults, and with imagining what might have happened had she not obeyed her mother.

When she reached her home she ran up to her mother, who stooped down to kiss her. "Dear mother," she said, "you must not kiss me until you can say you forgive me, for I have been a naughty girl all day, and though I have obeyed you, indeed I have not done so in thought or will." And then Ann told her mother of all her bad temper in the morning, and how she was brought to a sense of her fault, by hearing of Sarah Smith's sad accident. Her mother kissed her fondly.

"Dear child," she said, "let us be thankful that you were saved from the sin of disobedience, and from the punishment which perhaps might have followed its commission. I am sure you will see upon reflection, that if what your father and I tell you to do seems irksome,

still you are bound to obey us, because God Himself commands it. But you must come to tea now, for I am sure you will want some, as you have had no dinner to-day."

They sat down to tea, which Ann enjoyed, for she was very hungry; but she was much quieter than usual, and not like her generally merry self.

"Would you wish for an egg, dear?" her mother asked; "your white hen has laid a beautiful large egg to-day."

"May I take it to Sarah Smith?" said Ann, "now she is poorly, she may fancy a fresh-laid egg."

"Yes," answered her mother, "you can take it to her when you have finished your tea; and I will go with you, and see if Mrs. Smith is in want of anything."

So they went together and found Sarah in bed, and still in pain in her limbs from the cold ducking she had undergone. Mrs. Smith was rubbing her with hot flannels to bring back the circulation. She turned round and smiled at them when they entered, and told them that her little girl was much better. "We ought to be very thankful," she added, "that she was not drowned."

Ann felt how deeply she joined in this thankfulness, and took Sarah's hand, and presented her little offering of the egg, which pleased

her very much, and Sarah begged her to boil it for her supper. So the two girls chatted happily together, until Mrs. Herbert called her daughter to return home with her, as it was time for the little invalid to go to sleep.

The next day upon inquiring how Sarah was, they found her running about quite herself again; but Ann never forgot the lesson she had received on her duty to her parents, and if ever she was tempted to disobey them she brought to her remembrance how nearly she might have died in the midst of disobedience if she had followed her own wishes instead of her mother's directions.

She grew up a lively, pleasant-looking, good-tempered girl, and when she was seventeen years old she went to service at Squire Harvey's as under-housemaid, and she soon became a great favourite with all the household, as she was so very obliging, and ready to give a helping hand to anybody who needed it. When she got a little used to her fellow-servants she amused them by her quick and ready answers to their good-humoured fun in the servants' hall, and by her sprightly talk; for being an only child she had been brought forward more than is usual with some girls of her age, and allowed to let her tongue wag as long as she was not vulgar, or rude, or showed ill-will to anyone.

At the end of two years the upper-house-

maid married, and Ann was exalted to her place, and became an expert and good servant.

Mr. and Mrs. Harvey and their eldest daughter generally went to London in the spring for three months, and this year they brought back with them a smart town footman. He rejoiced in the name of James Montague, and had the most beautiful curled hair scented with delicious pomade; he was tall, and of a fine figure, which his fellow-servants thought to be "commanding in its height." He had elegant white hands, always kept scrupulously clean, and wearing upon grand occasions a glittering diamond ring upon his little finger. No wonder that all the village was enraptured with him, and when we add to these attractions that he sang melting songs and played on the guitar, which was suspended round his neck by a blue ribbon, and that he quoted poetry, and lisped a little, I feel sure that you will all own that his attractions in the servants' hall were irresistible.

The first Sunday he appeared at church he created quite a sensation as he put up his eyeglass at the clergyman, and stretched out his splendid legs clad in pink silk stockings.

Ann thought he was the most handsome man her eyes ever beheld, and when he condescended to talk to her as he walked back to the Hall, she knew how everyone must be

envying her, and felt it the proudest moment of her life.

As he sat after dinner he spoke of the sermon, which, he said, reminded him of one the Bishop of London had preached on an occasion when he, James Montague, was at the Chapel Royal, and he remembered standing near the Duke of Beaumarchais, who seemed to feel the discourse very deeply, and to be much affected by it.

Ann listened with all her ears. To be with one who had frequented such grand company and who talked familiarly of dukes and princes, and, moreover, who was polite enough to take notice of a little country girl like herself, almost turned her head, and when at the end of the evening he presented her with the geranium out of his button-hole she blushed a deep red, and walked up stairs to bed in a sort of dream of delight and flattered vanity. She placed his gift carefully in water, after first gently pressing it to her lips, and she closed her eyes in a tumult of feelings she did not care to analyse.

The next morning her first thought was—the flower! and there it stood on the little table just before her, its delicate petals quite recovered from their faintness of the preceding evening, and it brought back to her remembrance all Mr. James Montague's interesting

conversation, and his flattering looks more than words of the day before.

She did not remain idle however, she got up quickly, and went about her work with a light heart, feeling she should see him at breakfast, before which time he was never visible, and wondering whether he would take any notice of her, or whether he would forget that he had singled her out for any attentions. She finished all she had to do very neatly, and then looked in the glass to see that her cap was straight, and that no dust had settled on her smooth hair, and when eight o'clock struck and the bell rang, down she tripped, feeling a pleasant kind of palpitation under the band of her apron, and having a pretty little flush on her cheek.

Mr. Montague was not down, and she had almost finished her breakfast when he made his appearance, looking, as Ann thought, more captivating than ever. To her secret joy he recognized her across the table by a nod. "Good morning, Miss Ann," he said, "you look as blooming as a rose."

Ann felt quite confused, and partly to hide her blushes, and partly out of good nature, she turned to the fire, and warmed a piece of toast and offered it to him, saying it had got so cold she thought he would not fancy it unless freshened at the fire a little.

He thanked her politely, saying it would taste all the nicer from her fair fingers.

Ann knew that her hands were not very white, for they were used to hard work, and to make themselves useful, but she felt very pleased nevertheless, and every morning she made it her duty, or pleasure, I should rather say, to warm a piece of toast for him. "His appetite was very fickle," she would say, "and poor man, he ought to have something that he could eat."

Mr. Montague rewarded her for her pains by some sweet words and looks, and sometimes she was tempted to linger until the dining-room bell rang for prayers to listen to his talk, which grew every day more interesting to her.

He had a way of speaking of great people as if he was their chosen acquaintance and associate. "When I was driving with my Lord Worrytown," he would say, "his lordship's hat blew off, the wind being high at the time, and when I picked it up for him, he pleasantly observed, 'I suppose if there was a law passed like the great Napoleon made for his soldiers, that every man who lost his hat should lose his head, such a catastrophe as this would never happen;'" or, "one day at Lady Mary Tinybrain's the conversation turned upon the perfect education of French dogs, and her

ladyship said that when she was in Paris last winter she saw a poodle who knew the rank of everyone so well that he would not bow to anybody under the rank of a marquis; the Countess Fidgetsides mentioned that while she was in Paris she was shown the Empress's favourite pug, a lovely creature with large eyes, and a love of a tail, which curled so tight that it lifted him off his hind legs."

This kind of talking took with the party in the servants' hall amazingly; the old, grey-headed butler, who had lived in Mr. Harvey's family for twenty years, certainly gave an occasional Pish! or grunt of disapproval when Mr. Montague's speeches were more than commonly flowery or grandiloquent, but even he was pleased with his music, and as for all the others, they were enchanted with everything about him; from the kitchen-maid up to Mrs. Mumpey, the housekeeper, they all thought that England did not possess such another piece of perfection; so no wonder that poor Ann's simple head was turned by his fascinations, especially as he took the trouble to direct them to herself.

Time flew by only too quickly for Ann, who dreaded the arrival of the spring, for then the family would go to London, and Mr. Montague would accompany them, and what a blank would his absence cause! She could

not bear to think of it, her heart was entirely given to him, and she believed he loved her in return, though he had never told her so in so many words, yet his eyes and manner had, she thought, betrayed him again and again.

Ann was rather shocked to feel how little her father and mother had been in her mind of late; ever since this passion had taken possession of her she seemed not to have had time to think of them. Beyond seeing them at church, and knowing that they were well, she did not trouble much about them, and when the housekeeper said to her at Christmas that instead of going home for a week then, as she generally was allowed to do, she must put it off for a little, the house being so full of company, Ann was startled at the throb of pleasure her heart gave at hearing these words, for she could not bear the idea of running away from the Hall while Mr. Montague was there; and when the company had left, and Mrs. Mumpey told her that now she was at liberty to go and pay her parents a visit, Ann could hardly restrain her tears; but she felt that she must tear herself away, or everybody would wonder, and perhaps discover the reason. So she went with a very different step from her usual light and happy one, and resolved to make some excuse for only staying two days with them.

When she reached her home, she felt very happy at seeing her dear father and mother again, and they were so delighted to welcome her loved face amongst them once more, that she blamed herself sincerely for her unwillingness to leave the Hall, and resolved to remain with them until the end of the week, as she was allowed to do. But she caught herself many times counting how long it would be before she saw Mr. Montague again, and imagining what he was doing at various times in the day.

Mrs. Herbert saw that her daughter was not in her usual lively spirits, and questioned her several times; but Ann always contrived to evade her scrutiny.

The last day, just before she returned to Mr. Harvey's, Mrs. Herbert kissed her fondly, and begged Ann to tell her what was amiss, and at last, with many blushes and a few tears, she was induced to own that her affections were fixed upon Mr. Montague, that he was almost perfection in her eyes, and that she did not fancy she could ever live happily away from him.

Mrs. Herbert blamed herself for not thinking of this danger with the Hall servants for her darling. She had forgotten that her daughter was now growing up, and getting of an age when love affairs might be expected.

"You know, my darling," she said, "that your father and I can have but one wish, and that is your happiness, and if this young man is steady, and you both love one another, there is nothing we should like so much as to see you happily married, though you are very young as yet, dear, I own; but it would be very pleasant to have you, and this young man you talk about, come and take a cottage near us perhaps, and settle down comfortably. All I ask you is, that you will not engage yourself to him, or think of him more than you can help, until we have inquired something about him."

Ann readily promised this, and also that she would not show her preference for Mr. Montague, or allow herself to be much with him. And she walked back to the Hall feeling much happier for having told her mother all, and secretly rejoicing in the thought that she should soon see the man she loved again. The only misgiving she had was when she remembered what her mother had said about Mr. Montague settling down in a cottage. That he should work in a garden, and keep a pig, and employ himself in country employments, like her own father, for instance, would she felt be simply impossible; however, she thought, these things would right themselves.

So she took off her bonnet, and made her-

self neat, and went to dinner, where all the party were assembled.

Mr. Montague was telling one of his interesting stories about great people when she entered, but he stopped to speak to her, and added that they had missed her much. He made a space that she might come and sit down near him; but she thought of her mother's warnings, and took a chair the opposite side of the table. When she raised her eyes a short time afterwards, she saw his looking reproachfully at her, and it almost upset her.

As soon as she had finished her dinner, she went to her work as quickly as possible.

But evening was the trying time. She brought her sewing, and resolutely determined not to look at him. Unfortunately when she entered the room he seemed to her eyes more charming than ever. His guitar was suspended round his neck by its blue ribbon, his hair was beautifully brushed, and in his button-hole was a fresh, sweet, white rosebud.

Everyone was waiting, anxious to hear him begin his song.

"I stayed until you came, thinking you might like to hear it also, Miss Ann," he said, "but you look pale."

"Thank you, I am quite well," poor Ann answered, as she seated herself work in hand.

110 THE COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE.

But she soon forgot all about her work as she listened to his song, which was very soft and sweet.

The words were these.

"What is love? a toy?
Ah, no! ah, no!
Love is a life-long joy,
A plant that never dies,
Whose source was from the skies.

"Love cheers the wounded heart,
For aye, for aye;
Love, with its silver dart,
Joins severed souls in one,
Until life's journey's done.

"Love gilds the lowly cot
With light and life,
Making its humble lot
Brimful of peace and bliss,
And warmed with tend'rest kiss.

"Love dies with life, they say,
Not so, not so,
Love lives an endless day;
Heaven's kind, best gift was love,
Perfect, it reigns above."

There was a breathless silence all the time he was singing this touching refrain, and when he had finished everybody cried, "lovely," "sweet," "nice," "pretty," or "beautiful," according as it struck their fancy. Ann alone said nothing, for she felt too much for speech, and her eyes were filled with tears, which she was afraid every moment would overflow.

She was glad when bedtime came, and she could think over the events of the day undisturbed. It was hard of her mother to wish her to conceal her feelings, she fancied, and if she could have heard that splendid song, she would have had no misgivings about his character; no bad man *could* have sung that song, and she dropped asleep, trying to remember the delightful words.

The next morning she was careful to leave the servants' hall before he entered it, that she might not be tempted to warm the toast for him as usual, but it was a sore trial to her, and Mrs. Mumpey, seeing her look pale, thought she was sad at leaving her parents, so she sent her on an errand to the village shop, as a little change for her.

She went rather slowly, for her heart was very busy imagining its pleasant day-dream, and on her return, as she turned a corner of the lane, she suddenly met Mr. Montague face to face. She blushed deeply, and her heart fluttered like a wild bird in a cage.

"Oh, Ann," said Mr. Montague, "I am glad to have seen you, for I wanted to ask you how I have been so unfortunate as to offend you?"

"Indeed you have not offended me, Mr. Montague," said Ann in a low voice.

"Call me James, dear little Ann, for you

love me, do you not? My heart has been yours long ago, and surely you love me a little bit, do you not, dearest Ann?" said he, taking her hand.

She looked up in his face for one moment, and saw his eyes fixed tenderly upon her: all her promises and her mother's warnings were unheeded and forgotten. "James, I do love you," she cried, "entirely and devotedly."

He clasped her in his arms, and sealed the confession with one long, ardent kiss. And then came a delicious half-hour, which was never forgotten by Ann, when they seated themselves side by side on a fallen tree, and exchanged vows of never-dying affection. He told her how fond he was of her, and drew from her the depth and warmth of her young, loving heart, and taking a silver coin from his pocket, he broke it in two, and boring a hole in each half, he gave her one, and begged her to wear it in token of her promise of becoming his wife, and not to part with it as long as her love for him lasted.

"Then that will be until I die," she replied.

Just then the Hall bell rang.

"There is our tea ready," said James, "what will they all say to us?"

"I quite forgot Mrs. Mumpey," exclaimed Ann, "how she will wonder what I am about all this time."

So she took to her heels, and ran as fast as she could, and never stopped until she reached the Hall. Her bonnet was off in a trice, and then she joined the servants at their tea.

"Why, Ann," said Mrs. Mumpey, "what a time you have been; I shall not send you on an errand for me again."

"I am very sorry," answered Ann, "to have been so long; I hope you have not wanted the things."

"Fortunately I was in no great hurry, Ann, but now, have your tea at once, for we have almost finished. Where is Mr. Montague, I wonder, does anybody know? but he is always late for meals, so that is nothing to be surprised at."

Ann felt herself reddened, but she said nothing, and just then James entered, and made his polished bow, and polite excuse to Mrs. Mumpey, so that, as she said afterwards, no one could have the heart to find fault with him. And it crossed Ann's mind, how handsome and elegant he was, and what a lucky girl she ought to think herself that he should have taken a fancy to her. She was very quiet all the evening, for her heart was too full for words.

The next morning how charming was the waking, the feeling that something pleasant had happened, and the gradual consciousness of what this pleasant thing was, and how much

more delightful was the reality than the most charming dream she could imagine.

"He loves me!" she thought, and this certainty brightened every object that met her eyes, the sun shone with a warmer lustre, the birds sang more joyously, the early morning air seemed fresher and more fragrant than usual, and she never looked so pretty as she did when she came into the servants' hall to breakfast that morning.

She was rather late, as (if the truth must be told) she had gone up stairs, after the bell rang, to put on a clean collar and a little pink bow of ribbon, her step was light, she seemed to tread on air, and her eyes danced with happiness.

James gave her an admiring glance, and pointed to a chair next to him, where she placed herself with a glad smile, and gave herself up to the pleasure of being in the company of one so dear to her, and she allowed herself to remain for a little while after the rest of the party had left the room, to enjoy a few of his honeyed words, and earnest protestations of affection.

In the course of the morning she was told that her mother was come to see her, this was rather unusual, as Mrs. Herbert did not often come to interrupt her daughter in her duties. Ann felt a prick of conscience when she thought

how entirely she had disobeyed her mother's advice about not engaging herself to James until some inquiry had been made about his character, but she thought it was impossible there could be anything wrong in her dear James, so she ran down stairs eager to tell her mother what a happy creature she was. When she entered the housekeeper's room, she was shocked to see her mother in tears, and looking the picture of grief.

"Dear mother," she cried, "what is the matter?"

"O, my darling, I have, I fear, very sad news to tell you; Mr. Montague is not worthy of your love, we hear he has been courting Susan Williams this long time, and I believe she expects him to marry her."

"Mother, mother," exclaimed Ann, turning deadly pale, "it is not, it cannot be true, he loves me, and me alone, he told me so last evening, and I have plighted my troth to him."

"My dear Ann," said Mrs. Herbert, "I begged you not to have anything to do with the man until we had inquired about him; I assure you I do not speak unadvisedly, it is too true what I tell you; but I am so sorry for you, my dear child, and I cannot express to you the grief I feel at having to bring you such bad tidings."

Ann seemed hardly to hear her mother speak, she sat motionless, and white as a statue. Mrs. Herbert took her hand, and kissing her, said, "Dearest Ann, come home with me, and let us talk this over together quietly."

Ann started as if she had been stung.

"Mother," she said, "I cannot go until I have seen him; supposing this dreadful tale is untrue?"

"You shall do as you like, my dear, but come with me first, and hear from Susan herself whether the story be true or false."

Ann suffered her mother to lead her away, and while she was getting ready to accompany her, Mrs. Herbert found means to draw Mrs. Mumpey aside, and tell her as much of the tale as she thought right.

Mrs. Mumpey was a kind, motherly person, who did not consider the servants merely as machines to do the work, but interested herself in their well being, and encouraged them to come to her in any distress and difficulty. She was very sorry to hear of poor Ann's trouble, and willingly gave leave that she should go home for a little while.

"The family are going to London shortly, and the menservants will accompany them, so then Ann can come back to us," she said; "James is very civil, and a good servant, and we all like him very much, but we do not

know anything about his private character ; he was hired in London, and when master goes there this spring, I will ask him to make inquiries about James's habits and ways."

So Mrs. Herbert and her daughter walked slowly to Susan Williams' cottage ; Ann was leaning on her mother's arm, who suddenly felt her daughter tremble violently, and draw her back within the shadow of a wall which stood near ; she turned her head to see the cause of this agitation, and saw a tall man muffled up in a great coat, walking away with hasty steps, and she thought at once that this was the very person who had brought all this sorrow to poor Ann, and she pressed her hand to show her that she understood and felt for her.

As soon as James was out of sight, Ann said in a stifled voice, " Let us go on, mother, and hear what Susan has to say."

Mrs. Herbert thought the kindest thing would be to take her at her word, so she tapped at Mrs. Williams' door, and Susan opened it to them, dressed very smartly, and looking very happy.

" How do you do, Mrs. Herbert ?" she said, " pray come in ; why Ann seems poorly, does she not ? let her rest a little in our house."

" She does feel rather faint," answered Mrs. Herbert, " she has been doing a good deal this

morning, but she will soon be better, if you will allow her to sit down a bit, and give her a glass of water."

Susan soon fetched the water, and then Mrs. Herbert entered at once into the subject on her mind.

"Susan, I find Mr. Montague from the Hall is an admirer of yours, we have just met him coming from paying you a visit; has he fixed the day yet for the wedding?"

"Oh, Mrs. Herbert, how do you know this? he certainly has been here, but he begged me not to tell any one of our engagement, as we cannot be married until after he returns from London next. But though he has been courting me some time, he has been so sly, that I did not know that any one suspected it. I suppose you must have made him confess it himself when you met him just now."

"Never mind, Susan, we shall not betray your secret," said Mrs. Herbert, and then she talked on other subjects, to give her daughter time to recover a little from this terrible shock.

As soon as possible she took her departure, leading Ann by the hand, who looked like one stunned.

"Take me home, dear mother," she sobbed, when they were outside the house, "and never let me leave you any more."

Her parents were both very tender and kind to her, and never alluded to this sad affair,

until she brought it forward herself two evenings afterwards.

"May I not see him once more?" she asked, "you need not fear my being deceived again, but I should like to see him once more."

"My darling," they both said, "we beg of you not to think of it, it can do no possible good, and he will only try to make you overlook his conduct; and a person who could delude another in that sort of way, would never be fit to be trusted."

"Well, dear father and mother, I will do as you tell me, for I have suffered very much from not following your advice already; it would not have been half so bad to find out he was untrue, if I had not allowed myself to be engaged to him that morning. But I am thankful that the truth was discovered, and I trust I shall give you no more trouble."

They kissed her, and were very thoughtful of her in every way, and she did not venture out of the house for fear of meeting James, until she heard that all the family were gone to London. She then went for a little walk, as she felt that the fresh air would do her good, and she sat down on a stile, thinking how much older she seemed since the few weeks she last passed that way. Nothing looked so bright as it did then, sin appeared to have left its blighting influence on all around

her; the day was dull, and the very earth and sky bore to her mind the impress of evil. She covered her face with her hands, and the tears oozed through her fingers; even to love brought a curse with it, she thought, and she remained for some time quite still, with the pleasant dream of the past, and its sad awakening crossing before her mind.

All at once she felt an arm pass gently round her waist, and a voice close to her ear whispered, "Ann, Ann."

She started up as quick as lightning, there stood James before her, rather more grave than usual, but still his own handsome self.

"Mr. Montague," she cried, "I wonder you are not ashamed to see me, still more to touch me, after deceiving me in the way you have done; and I beg you will go on at once, and leave me alone."

"Ann, dear Ann," he exclaimed in faltering accents, "is that the way you speak to me, after owing to me that you loved me? have you forgotten those sweet words, which I shall never forget, that you uttered in the lane that happy morning?"

"How dare you allude to it, Mr. Montague, when all the time you were making love to Susan Williams, and the day is almost fixed for your marriage?"

"I shall never marry Susan Williams," he

answered, "I can explain every thing to you fully, and it is for this purpose that I remained in the village after the others were gone, as I was determined to see you, and to own to you that I had a fancy for Susan before I saw you, but that when I became acquainted with you, my love was entirely yours, and the only difficulty was how to break with Susan, so I put her off until after my return from London, hoping by that time you would have agreed to marry me, and that she would have chosen some one else, for she does not love me as you do, dearest Ann. Forgive me, my own dear little one, my only fault was the not liking to trouble you with my worries and embarrassments."

And Ann believed and forgave him, as what loving woman would not believe the man she loved, and forgive him too, when his chief sin appeared to be that he forgot every thing but his love for her?

"Dearest Ann," continued James, after an eloquent pause, composed of squeezings of the hand, and looks that spoke more powerfully than words could do, "come with me to London, let us go first to some quiet town, where I will get a licence, and we can be married immediately, and then, oh, dear Ann, we shall be so happy! Do not refuse my request, darling, I shall be miserable without you."

It was a sore temptation. Why should she not go with the man she loved, and be his blissful wife? She raised her eyes, the roof of her father's cottage was just visible through the trees, and the blue smoke curled softly but steadily upwards, like the incense of prayer rising to Heaven from earnest hearts. Under that roof lived her parents who loved her also very deeply, perhaps their prayers were now being offered up for her; and they had so seriously entreated her to have nothing more to do with this man; could she act directly in opposition to their wishes? Could she expect a blessing would follow if she disobeyed them? "Honour thy father and mother" was the command of God Himself,—this thought saved her.

"Dear James," she said in a firm voice, "I have quite made up my mind not to go with you now: when you return from London, if all is well, and you still wish it, I will be your wife. After all it is not long to wait, and the time will soon pass."

James tried to induce her to alter her determination, but without success, and she ran quickly home to escape further importunity, and told her mother what had happened. She agreed with her that they would wait patiently and hope for the best.

About a week after this, Mrs. Mumpey sur-

prised them by calling rather early, as she was not often able to leave home in the morning, she looked very grave, and taking Mrs. Herbert aside, she gave her a letter to read from her master, which she had just received.

"You had better read it to Ann when I am gone, for I fear the news it contains will be a shock to her," she said, and soon afterwards took her departure.

Mrs. Herbert opened the letter with trembling fingers, and there found that Mr. Harvey had inquired about the private history of James Montague, and discovered that he was actually a married man, that he had been married three years, and his wife and one child lived in an out-of-the-way street in London. Mr. Harvey added that he was so annoyed by James' deceitful conduct, that he should discharge him before he returned into the country.

Ann was horror-stricken at this dreadful disclosure, her first thought was gratitude for the escape she had had. "Oh, dear mother, let us thank God together for His mercy in saving me from such life-long misery. How glad I am that I was not led away by passion to forget your warnings, and disobey your wishes." She also begged her mother to take the letter to Susan Williams, that she might not be deceived in him any longer. This Mrs. Herbert did, and Susan received the intelli-

gence of James Montague's false conduct about as differently from Ann as could be imagined. She tossed her head, "I wish his wife luck with him," she exclaimed, "a nice bargain she has got; I am sure she is very welcome to him, *I* don't envy her for one, there are many more, better men than he is, in the world." So Mrs. Herbert came away, feeling there was no fear of Susan breaking her heart this time.

Ann set herself in earnest to make her parents happy, and to do her duty, and forget the bad man who had obtained such a hold over her affections. She was cheerful and serene, but never quite the merry creature she was before she obtained this sad insight into a black human nature. She remained in service for some years longer, and then married a respectable steady man, who had loved her a long time, and who was a great favourite with her parents.

Their dream came true of her settling in a house near them, and she often looked back in the calm contentedness of a happy wedded life to the uneasy fever fit of past years with thankfulness, that God had safely brought her to the blessed haven of safety and peace. Verily the obedience to parents had met with its reward even in this life.



THE CRICKET-MATCH.

Sixth Commandment.

"Anger is like rain which breaks itself upon that it falls."

"When the furious fit was overpast,
His cruel facts he often would repent ;
Yet wilful man he never would forecast
How many mischiefs would ensue his heedless haste."

"**W**HAT is the cause of all this disturbance, nurse?" said a lady entering the nursery where the noise of a roaring child was so great that her voice could hardly be heard.

"Oh, ma'am, it is only Master Percy in one of his tantrums," answered the nurse. "it will soon be over, and then he will be good."

"Well, nurse, I beg when Master Percy is naughty like this you will keep the double doors shut, for really my nerves will not stand such a clamour and riot," said Mrs. Hammond, leaving the room.

In time Percy, having tired himself with

his violent fit of passion, went to sleep on the floor, and awoke in a very lively, happy humour, having quite forgotten what had made him in such a rage, and appearing as if nothing could ever offend him again. His nurse got tired of checking him, and having four other children to look after she let him do pretty much as he liked. "Master Percy," she would say, "would come round, if you took no notice ; and if his spirit was high, at all events, the worst was soon over, and a nicer tempered boy, when he was not offended, did not exist !" In fact everybody loved him, he was so affectionate and warm-hearted, and he did not care what trouble he took to oblige those who were kind to him : he also was very lively and full of fun, so that he was the life of the little party in the nursery. Unfortunately his temper was exceedingly hasty—he would fly into a rage in a moment. Then he seemed almost beside himself, and hardly to know what he said or did. The nurse had tried to correct him, and show him how very naughty it was of him to give way to his angry feelings, but without much success, though he would always own how sorry he was for what had happened when the fit was over. His father, Mr. Hammond, was a lawyer, and engaged in business all day, so he had very little time to attend to his family, and Mrs. Hammond was an inva-

lid, who did not see much of the children, as she could not bear their noise and bustle. They were always taken down to the drawing-room to see her for half an hour after she had finished her breakfast, and for the same period before her dinner-hour, and nurse used to declare that they were always naughtier at those times than they were all the rest of the day. Something was sure to happen, to bring on a great cry, or a passionate fit of Percy's.

"It must be the contrariety of human nature," nurse would say; "but as soon as they have their best things on, and are told to keep quiet, they choose that identical moment for an uproar, such as they don't attempt at other times."

One evening, when they were brought down to the drawing-room, waiting in great order to be spoken to, Percy was standing behind his little sister, and for something to do tied the ends of her grand sash round the back of a chair. Mrs. Hammond called Rose, and she sprang forward and fell down, and the chair on the top of her, which gave her head a hard bump, so that she cried lustily, and they all had to be sent away in disgrace. Another time Percy trod on the tail of the large beautiful white Persian cat, which was sitting in the middle of the hearth-rug just before the fire, and winking his eyes, and looking as Percy fancied as

if he was thinking of nothing, and ought to be roused a little; but upon feeling the indignity offered to his bushy tail, poor pussy uttered such a yell that even nurse gave a jump, and as for Mrs. Hammond she went into hysterics outright. On another occasion Percy's brother giving his hair a sly pull, caused Percy to fly at him like a wild animal, and they had a regular fight in the drawing-room, upsetting a table, and breaking a handsome china jar, which stood upon it.

Percy's brother Charles was awe-stricken and quieted by the mischief he had done; but Percy was not come to the end of his fight, and he had to be dragged up stairs kicking, struggling, and plunging. No wonder that poor Mrs. Hammond thought that there was not such another bad boy as Percy upon the face of the earth, and that an evil spirit must surely possess him, or such outrageous things would not come into his head. Nurse used to talk to him very seriously at times, as his mother was not strong enough to do so, and teach him to pray that his hasty temper might be subdued, and he would then resolve to remember her words; but the very next time he was tempted he would forget everything but the impulse of the moment.

The children had a little puppy, called Pug, which they were all very fond of, it was the

most amusing creature possible, and up to all sorts of diverting tricks. He would sit on his hind legs with a bit of bread on his nose, and not attempt to eat it until they had said, "make ready, present," and at the word "fire," he would throw it up in the air, and catch it in his mouth. Then he would dance all round the room, just in time to a tune which they would sing to him; and when they came to a high note he would join the exact cadence, and continue it after they had all stopped. These and many other amusing ways, as well as the love of the little animal for all the children, endeared him to them exceedingly, and Percy especially was devoted to him.

About this time Percy was deeply engaged in concocting a wonderful kite, which was to be superior to any kite ever before created; and he pestered nurse, and all those about him the whole day, for paper, string, and paste, wherewith to build this kite of kites. At last the final dab of paste was plastered on its huge sides, the magnificent length of tail, with all its curl papers attached to it, fluttered over the back of a chair, and it was pronounced perfect by the assembled group, who, however, were only allowed to admire it from a respectful distance.

Nurse called them all now to take their walk, and Percy spread his damp treasure on

the ground before the fire to dry, with strict orders that no one was to go near it while he was away; and nurse even gave him leave to turn the key of the nursery-door, that no ill-advised person might incontinently come near to molest this paper beauty.

Alas! he did not perceive that poor Pug (tired with running about all the morning,) was fast asleep on a cushion in the corner of the room. Almost as soon as the door was closed behind them the puppy missed his friend's voice and jumped up to join them. Finding the door shut he became restless, and running towards the fire he stood upon the kite, which being damp gave way under his feet, and he went upon another part and popped through it again, so that very soon the fine toy was full of great holes; and not contented with doing this mischief, Pug found the taste of the damp paste rather agreeable, so he chewed and tore up all the ragged paper, until nothing remained of the handsome kite but its outside useless rim of wood. I tremble to describe the scene that followed the opening of the door to the young party, on their return from their walk! The puppy was scampering about with bits of the destroyed plaything in his mouth. He was in the highest spirits, as if he rejoiced in all the mischief he had done, and he ran up to Percy, appearing

to expect applause. The boy turned white with anger, and seizing poor Pug, he threw him with all his force out of the room, and he fell into a pail of hot water, which the under nursery-maid was unfortunately bringing at that moment, to wash the floor with.

A cry issued from everybody present, and Rose rushed forward, and, at the risk of scalding her fingers, snatched the poor little dog out of the water, but he was quite dead. The hot bath must have killed him instantly. Then what confusion followed this sad discovery! The children all crying and lamenting; indeed there was not a dry eye in the room, even nurse shed tears over their favourite, and as for Percy he sobbed as if his heart would break.

"Nurse, nurse," he cried, "what shall I do? Oh, how wicked I am! shall I never get rid of my vile passionate temper? That I should kill our darling little dog, whom we all love so dearly, seems too dreadful. You must hang the poor little fellow round my neck, like the albatross was hung round the neck of the wicked old sailor, who slew him. Surely I shall never forget this horrible warning; shall I, nurse?"

"We must pray God that you may not do so, Master Percy; but, remember, how often you have resolved to curb your temper, but hitherto without success."

"But, nurse, I have never done anything so horrible as this before ; and when I am tempted to be angry, I am certain that our dear little dog's dead body will rise before my eyes, and prevent my giving way to my bad passions."

"I trust and pray it may be so," answered the nurse, "for it is my belief that when you are in one of your tempers you do not know what you are about for a moment, and as you grow older you would be liable to kill anybody without intending it, which would be a poor consolation to you or to anyone else after it was done. But, Miss Rose, you must kiss your brother, and not call him cruel any longer ; you see he is very sorry for what he has done ; and we will all go and bury the poor little dog." For nurse thought that they had been miserable long enough, and that they would be ill if she let them dwell upon the sad tragedy much longer.

So they made a mournful procession to their flower-garden, Percy tenderly carrying the defunct remains of Pug, which were wrapped up in cotton wool, and placed in a wooden box nurse found for them.

The burial took place with great ceremony under a rose tree, and Percy placed a large stone over the spot, upon which he scratched as deep as he could with his knife, "Alas, poor Pug."

Nurse then took her little flock into the

house, and told them one of her interesting and cheerful stories to divert their thoughts from the melancholy catastrophe which had just occurred. But the lesson was not forgotten by Percy, and it served as a check against his hasty temper on many occasions.

When Mr. Hammond came home that evening nurse thought it right to tell him what had happened, not that Percy required further punishment, for he could not receive a greater one than the loss of his playful favourite, but she considered he was become too old for the control of the nursery.

Mr. Hammond quite agreed with her, and determined to send him at once to Mr. Vaughan, the clergyman of the next parish, who would teach him Latin with his own boys, until he was of an age to go to school.

Percy was now seven years old, but he was rather backward, as he had only the opportunities of learning which nurse could afford him; he was, however, very quick, and soon made up for lost time. Mr. Vaughan used to say that it was a pleasure to teach him, and to see the bright, intelligent face look up into his to catch the new idea, and to try to understand what was said to him.

After the shy feeling of going among strangers was over, Percy enjoyed his daily visit to his tutor's house of all things.

Mr. Vaughan was very kind to him, though he was strict that the lessons he set should be thoroughly learned.

The two young Vaughans were both a little older than himself, and could show him how to play foot-ball, leap-frog, hare and hounds, and all such active games, besides actually riding a live pony. This Mr. Vaughan would never allow them to do unless he could be with them, and then they would take the pony and ride by turns.

What a delight it was to Percy when he was allowed to mount, and could feel his little legs touch Brownny's fat sides !

They did not use stirrups, as Mr. Vaughan thought the boys would acquire a better seat without them, and the two brothers sometimes had a canter across a field and back again, but Percy as yet was not permitted to go out of a foot-pace.

When the weather was fine the nurse and the other children walked with Percy to Mr. Vaughan's in the morning directly after breakfast, while if it was wet the old coachman took him.

At five o'clock Percy returned home again, and if he had been very good, Mr. Vaughan would reward him by letting him ride the pony up to his own door ; and what an excitement did his arrival create in such guise among

the little ones. Down scampered the four children, and nurse after them, while Percy tried to look grand, and as if he had been used to be perched on the top of a pony for years.

Sunday was always spent at home, and Percy was now advanced to the distinguished honour of walking with his father to church, while nurse took charge of the smaller fry, and then Percy would tell his father of all he had been doing and learning during the week, and one day, as he was holding his hand, he ventured to ask for what was the dream and ambition of his life, namely, that he might have a pony of his own, like the young Vaughans.

"Do you think you deserve this indulgence?" said Mr. Hammond, "what was that I heard only last Tuesday about your throwing your lesson-book into the fire because you were turned back in it when you wanted to go and play with the others?"

"Oh, papa," answered Percy, the tears springing into his eyes, "I know I have a wicked, passionate temper; but I really do try to keep it down."

"Well, my boy," said his father, "if at the end of a month I find that you have not only *tried*, but subdued those angry feelings, I will promise to give you a pony."

"Thank you, thank you, papa; I will be so very careful that I shall be sure to win it."

"Do not be too sure, my dear, you will find it much more difficult when the temptation comes than it seems to be now at a distance; and remember Whom you must ask for help, without Whose aid you cannot hope to overcome evil."

"Yes, papa, I will," answered Percy in a low voice. And that night when he went to bed he prayed to God that He would help him to be a good boy, and to conquer his hasty temper.

At first nothing particular happened to try him, or only such slight causes for taking offence that they seemed to him, in the state of guard in which he then was, to be no trials at all. One time he very nearly fell. Mr. Vaughan gave a piece of garden ground to the care of each of the boys, and there was great rivalry among them as to which should keep it in the best order. Percy planted very carefully some mustard and cress in his garden in the form of his name, and to his great joy, after hoping and waiting for some little time without any result, one morning he saw in his garden a great green "Percy Hammond." He ran immediately to ask Mr. Vaughan to come and look at his newly discovered treasure, and as they returned together Arthur Vaughan

was just bringing the pony to the door, with the rein carelessly hanging over his arm; when the pony heard Percy's shouts, and saw him rushing up towards him, he backed a little, and in a moment his hoofs had trampled over poor Percy's mustard and cress, and before they could get him off the bed nothing remained of the neat planting but a little green at the bottom of several deep holes. Percy flushed up very red.

"I am very sorry for you. Remember this is one of your trials," said Mr. Vaughan, putting his hand on Percy's shoulder.

Percy ran back into the house, and in a short time came out again.

"Do you think that I may tell papa that I have conquered?" he asked.

"Indeed I think you may, my dear boy," answered Mr. Vaughan, "and I am sure he will be glad to hear that you are so brave. 'Greater is he that subdueth his temper than he that taketh a city,' you know."

"But, sir, I felt very angry," said Percy, "and if you had not spoken I think I should have flown at Arthur or the pony."

"Let us hope, my dear, that next time the victory will be easier. And now get on mischievous Brownny, and we will go our round of the parish; you can put your garden to rights another time."

So the days slipped by, and only one day remained of the month of probation his father had allotted him, and he began to think whether he might venture to claim the reward of the pony, when that very evening he was showing his little sisters a new foot-ball Mr. Vaughan had given him, and which he hoped to use the next day; they were all in high spirits, and Rose for fun snatched it, and ran away with it, and he after her; he chased her all round the garden, when suddenly her foot slipped on the grass, and she fell, and the ball escaping from her hand, rolled down the bank, and popped into a fish-pond which was close by.

Percy fired up, and raised his arm to strike her, when he remembered the pony, and checking himself quickly, he told her to "never mind," for the poor child was crying, "she did not do it on purpose."

Percy told the gardener what had happened, who managed to fish up the ball with a net, and it was not at all the worse for the wetting. So Percy congratulated himself upon having saved his plaything and his temper too.

Monday morning arrived, and Percy had just finished his breakfast, when he was told to come down directly, for his father wanted to speak to him. Away Percy ran, and saw Mr. Hammond standing before the front door,

which was open. He was looking at something; what could it be? When Percy came nearer he could hardly believe his eyes; there, before the door, stood the most lovely pony that his wildest dreams had ever imagined.

It was perfectly white, there was not a dark hair all over his body, it had a beautiful long mane and tail, a spirited arched neck, and good firm legs, and moreover there was a saddle on its back.

Percy stood for a moment too delighted to speak.

"Well, Percy, do you like your pony?" said Mr. Hammond, smiling at him.

"Like it? oh, papa, I feel it is too much, I don't deserve it in the least," answered the boy, making a spring at his father's neck, and giving him a great hug.

"You have done your best, my dear," said Mr. Hammond, "and so I have done my best to get you a little animal I think you will like. But go and fetch your cap, for I shall steal half an hour from business this morning to see how you can manage Snowball."

So his father walked with him to Mr. Vaughan's, and as they went along he told him that he must not relax his efforts to conquer his temper, now that he had obtained what he longed for, it ought rather to be an incentive to greater exertions.

"Indeed it will, papa," said Percy, "there is no fear of my ever being in a passion again, for if I am tempted, I shall think of this beautiful Snowball, and that will calm me in a minute."

"Don't be too sure of that, my boy; remember, Rome was not built in a day, and it takes a long time to get rid of a bad habit. But we have the satisfaction of knowing that the more we try, the more easy it becomes."

What exclamations greeted them when they reached the Vaughans' house. Snowball was examined, his paces tried, and he was admired as much as he deserved. Then Brownny was brought out, and compared with Snowball, and it was agreed what a capital pair of contrasts they made. Of course Percy thought that Brownny was not fit to be named in the same day as Snowball, while the two Vaughans held by their old favourite, so there was quite a war of words amongst them, and Percy got angry and hot, until Mr. Hammond said to him, "My boy, don't you see how very inconvenient it would be, if we all of us admired the same thing?"

Then Percy felt ashamed that he had been so silly, and the ponies were taken to the stable, and lessons began, which had been rather delayed by the exhibition of the new treasure that morning.

And so time slipped by quietly and silently, Percy making progress in his studies, and learning to govern his temper ; now and then he forgot his good resolutions and gave way to an outburst of passion, but the instances were comparatively rare, and his compunction afterwards was deep and sincere. He was now allowed to canter to Mr. Vaughan's by himself, indeed he would leap Snowball over any fence of which he was capable, and it was impossible to say which enjoyed the jump the most, whether Percy or the spirited little pony.

Percy was now ten years old, and his father thought it was quite time he should go to school, that he might mix more with other boys, and obtain the advantage of the best masters. So Mr. Hammond determined to send him to a large school some little way off, where Mr. Vaughan's second son Arthur was just gone, who was nearly a year older than Percy.

When the household knew that Percy was to go to school, it caused an extraordinary excitement among them all, from the highest to the lowest. Nurse began cutting out as many shirts for him as would serve a soldier for an Indian campaign. Rose worked him a magnificent purse, so covered with steel beads, that the weight of it almost burst a hole in his pocket before any money was put into it. The youngest little girl knitted him a pair of muf-

fatees for his wrists. Cook looked quite grave with considering how many cakes, plum puddings, and mince pies she could cram into the largest hamper ever made; and even Mrs. Hammond began an elegant sticking-plaster case for him, which however she did not feel strong enough to finish.

At last his things were all packed, nurse showed him with tears in her eyes the inventory of his clothes, such a long one, that there was hardly room to paste it in the cover of his box; the dog-cart was at the door with the large hamper smuggled inside it, and his father called to him to come, or they should be too late for the train. So he jumped in and took his seat by the side of his father, followed by the last adieus of all the party assembled at the hall door to see the departure, Rose calling after him to be sure to write to her every day. Percy's eyes were wet with tears, for it was his first absence from home, and he felt as if he had never loved any one half so much as he ought; but after a little while his father began talking about school, and how pleasant it would be for him to meet Arthur Vaughan there, and how eagerly they should all look forward to his return at Midsummer, when perhaps he would be at the top of his class and bring a prize home with him, so that he was able to enter the school house, and be in-

troduced to the dreaded master, and part from his father with a brave heart.

Then he and Arthur Vaughan had a long talk, they were to be in the same form, and books had to be looked at, and a great deal settled; then Percy thought he would take some of his things out of his box, and had just unlocked it, when a number of boys came trooping up stairs.

"Whom have we here?" said one.

"Oh, it's the new boy," cried another; "my eye, what a big box!" he continued, "are all those things yours, little one? What a list! this must be inquired into; four flannel waistcoats? they are very bad for you with your red face."

"I don't wear them," answered Percy, "but nurse thought I might like to do so here, as it might be colder than home."

"Pretty dear," said Henry Johnson, (a tormenting boy,) "he has got a nurse, has he? is she come with you, my love, to take care of you and your nice lot of clothes?"

"She is not my nurse," said Percy, firing up, "that is only the name she goes by at home."

"Don't get angry, little one, when you are asked polite questions, or your nurse will scold you, and we shall have to punish you; I hope she has put you up some bibs and pinafores, as

if you throw your tea over your jacket you will get a whipping. But what is this entry? Eighteen shirts! I am afraid you are a depraved boy to monopolise so many to your own share, when there are a vast number of little black boys without one to their back. We must look into these things, for as I am one of the elder boys, I should not like such a valuable cargo as this to arrive, without seeing that all is right, if any are missing I might be blamed perhaps." So saying, he dived with his hand down one side of the trunk, and pulled up something wrapped very neatly in silver paper, which Percy knew to be the purse. He flew at the boy like a young tiger.

"Give it to me," he cried, "it is mine; you shall not touch my things."

"What a fury!" said Henry Johnson, keeping him at arm's length; "bring that chair, we must teach him manners."

In one minute Percy, red and panting, found himself tied in the chair with his own pocket-handkerchiefs, while the laughing boys amused themselves by examining the contents of his beloved box, and making comments on all they found there. The purse amused them very much.

"Is this what you are going to produce the penny from, when Molly Brown comes with apples?" inquired they, "how she will stare!

I hope you have another like it, for by the time you have filled it with coppers, it will make you as crooked as a ram's horn for life, if you wear such a weight on one side only, and if you string it round your neck, it will hang you. But what jolly pellets these would make for the air gun, and just the right size too; it perhaps may be the humble means of saving your life, if we relieve you of the weight of them."

They pointed to two little steel globes which formed ornaments at the ends of the purse. And Percy, in spite of his wrath and protestations, saw them take a penknife and deliberately cut them off, and put them in their pockets. Next the muffatees came in sight.

"Here are some nice leggings," exclaimed his tormentors. "Ducky darling, he should have his ankles warm." And though he kicked lustily, and assured them that they were intended for the wrist, they insisted in trying to drag them over his feet; one they cracked, the other they had got on as far as the heel, when the bell rang for tea; they untied all the knots that confined Percy to the chair at the same moment, so he found himself at liberty, but had only the satisfaction of giving the last boy one good cuff just as he was disappearing, as he had also to make the best of his way to the tea-table.

When tea was over, his boiling indignation had vanished, and he was able to laugh with the boys at all their discoveries, so that they said he was a good little chap after all. He quite forgave them also for cutting the little balls off Rose's purse, when he heard them softly whiz out of the air gun, and after he had himself shot an unfortunate sparrow that had settled for a moment on the top of the wall, he only wished that he had another purse that he could serve in the same manner.

The next day when he produced all the good things out of his hamper, and seemed to have more satisfaction in seeing all his school-fellows enjoy them, than in gobbling them up himself, he got further into their good graces. And when they found that he was a good hand at cricket, and that he was active in most of the athletic games in vogue among the boys, they pronounced that he would do, and that he was a capital fellow.

They soon found out that he was of a very peppery disposition, and with all the tormenting propensities of boys they delighted to stir him up, and rouse him to wrath, which unfortunately was only too easy a matter, especially as boys know just the little teasing things which have more power to annoy than great worries, against which we are generally more on our guard. Percy used to think sorrow-

fully at night when he said his prayers, that he was going back to the naughtiness of his early years, as he remembered how many times he had flown out into a rage that day, and he would resolve that in the next, he would take so much care that nothing should move him. But it was very different here at school, among companions of all tempers and dispositions, some as hasty and ready to take offence as himself, to what it had been at home with a few chosen friends, and his father or Mr. Vaughan always at hand to warn and guide him. Sometimes he came off conqueror over himself by a great effort, but often sudden little unexpected torments would occur, and he would forget his good resolutions, and rush at the offender without regard to size or age, and a great fight would ensue, Percy often getting dreadfully battered. He never bore malice or ill will to any one for the punishment he received, and however much he had been pommelled, he always felt that he was the one in the wrong, to give way to his temper, and that he deserved the beating. And if it was a smaller boy than himself who had teased him to anger, as soon as he had knocked him down, his sorrow for his ungoverned rage was double, so that he was loved by all the boys, great and small.

Strange to say, the only one for whom he

felt any jealousy was Arthur Vaughan. Being about the same size, and not much difference in age, there was an unacknowledged rivalry between them in all they did, which created a sort of uncomfortable feeling of opposition. Instead of being the fast friends, which everybody expected they would be, a slight coolness sprang up which neither would have liked to confess to the other. They were both, as we have said, in the same form, and being well grounded and forward for their age, were soon at the top of the class. Here the emulation between them was at its height, sometimes one was first, sometimes he was obliged to give place to the other. Percy was most quick, while Arthur was most plodding, so that it seemed a very doubtful matter which of the boys would carry away the prize at the end of the half year, and it kept up a constant fever of excitement between them.

Again at their games they were almost equally matched,—they were expert swimmers, and wonderful struggles took place as to which could go on the longest; they always contended for the mastery in running races also, but the great contest was in cricket, this they had been accustomed to play with Mr. Vaughan as soon as they were able to handle a bat, and they both prided themselves upon their skill in this noble game, and were envious of each

other, if one exhibited more dexterity than the other.

I do not know if any one believes in what are called "unlucky days," days when every thing seems to go wrong, and nothing we can do appears to have any power to alter it. At all events Percy was fully persuaded of the power the weird sisters had over the thread of fate on such days of misfortune.

One Monday, towards the end of the half year,—a black Monday he called it all his life afterwards,—he began the day by oversleeping himself, and was obliged to rush down stairs without saying his prayers; he lost his boot too, which delayed him, and after a grand search, he found it at the other end of the room, where he remembered then throwing it at some boy who had offended him the last thing the night before. He got an imposition given him for being late, which further annoyed him, as he wanted all his spare time for looking over his lessons for the day, which he knew he had not been very careful in preparing, and also he wished to get ready for a great cricket-match which was to take place in the afternoon, between their own school and the boys of the Otway school, which was some little way distant. The consequence of being worried made him not attend properly to his lessons, so he had the additional disgust of

seeing Arthur Vaughan walk up above him to the top of the class, which place Percy had retained for nearly a week, and hoped he was secure of it for a few days longer only, and then he would be safe for the prize. Arthur could not suppress a glance of triumph which he cast at Percy as he walked past him to the top of the class, for which Percy would have given the world to have knocked him down on the spot, and perhaps the bottling up his indignation did not help to improve his temper.

The boys had a half-holiday, but owing to his imposition and imperfect lessons, Percy was not able to join the party on the cricket field until the game was nearly over, which was a great disappointment to him, and he bore the impress of his angry feelings on his face.

"Here comes Sir Anthony Spitfire," cried Harry Johnson; "he looks as savage as a bear."

"I suppose he has had a nice flogging," added another.

"Take care he don't snap your head off," said a third; and a running fire of teasing went on all round, Percy longing to punish somebody, but not knowing exactly whom to attack.

At last one exclaimed, "Come, don't rile

him any more, but let him take his bat in hand, and begin at once."

"Mind," they said, "everything depends upon you."

The game stood thus, the Otway boys scored 101 and Percy's schoolfellows 90. Percy alone remained to play, and as he was justly considered a very good hand, they all thought, as he did himself, that the victory would without fail be on their side. What was the dismay, when at the very first ball he was caught out. A groan burst from all his party when they saw his wicket down, which was returned by a shout from their adversaries.

"What a muff!" called out Arthur Vaughan, who was standing near; "how jolly green to be caught out the first ball."

This was too much for Percy; his wrath, which had been smouldering in his breast for a long time, here broke loose, and having his bat in his hand he swung it quickly round, and gave him a blow which struck him on the side of the head, and he fell down like one shot. Percy recovered his temper instantly, and ran to the prostrate boy, and tried to lift him up.

"Arthur," cried he, "I am so sorry for my fury. Oh! forgive me, Arthur."

But there was no answer, his eyes were closed, his face was ghastly white, he seemed

not to breathe ; and when Percy attempted to raise him, he only fell back again.

By this time all the boys were collected round the spot.

"He is dead, I have murdered him," screamed Percy.

"He has only fainted," said Henry Johnson ; "go and fetch some water in your cap."

Percy flew to the river, which was not far off, and quickly brought some water, with which they bathed his face and hands, but without producing any effect ; he still remained inanimate, and to all appearance without life.

Percy seemed like one distracted, he wrung his hands, and kept calling himself a murderer, while the boys began to look very grave. They thought it was better to give him something to do, so they told him to run into the town and bring the doctor, while they carried Arthur Vaughan to the house. So Percy went as fast as it was possible to the doctor's house, and was thankful to see his gig standing before the door, as he knew then that he must be at home. He rang the bell violently ; but when the servant came, he was too much out of breath to speak. However she saw by his horror-stricken face, that some dreadful thing had happened, and called her master ; and then Percy was able to gasp out, "Sir, come

quickly, for I have knocked down Arthur Vaughan, and killed him."

The doctor jumped into his gig and told Percy to do the same, and they drove at a swift pace to the school; but though they were only a few minutes getting there, the time seemed endless to Percy. In front of the school were a number of boys anxiously looking for the doctor.

"We have carried him up stairs," they said; "but none of us are allowed to go into the room where he is."

Percy followed the doctor to the door of the room, where they were endeavouring to restore animation to the form of his friend, and he sunk on his knees, his whole body shaking as from an ague fit, while he listened with intense agony to the muffled sounds within that awful room, longing for news, yet shrinking from what he feared must be the terrible end; and with blanched face, and features fixed and motionless, a horrible vision rose slowly up before him, of what he must expect to happen. His father and Mr. Vaughan coming, and demanding, where is Arthur thy friend? and this dead friend's blood crying out against him; while he, with Cain's mark upon his forehead, should hear the dreadful sentence, "No murderer has eternal life abiding in him." This sentence rang again and again in

his ears. He prayed in his extreme anguish for mercy and pity: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner,"—"a grievous sinner," he whispered—"and of Thy infinite pity, if it be possible, spare me for CHRIST's sake, this last most fearful judgment!"

Percy remained in this position until he felt sick with dread and anxiety; but he had no power to move. At last some one coming suddenly out of the room, stumbled over him, it was Dr. Reid, the head-master.

"Who is that?" said the master, turning towards Percy; and when he saw who it was, he told him to come with him to his study. So Percy crept after him, feeling his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, and without the ability of uttering one word.

When they reached the doctor's study, Percy managed to gasp out, "Sir, is he dead?"

Dr. Reid looked at him, and from the misery and penitence depicted in his face, he saw that it would be cruel to keep him in suspense.

"We must be thankful," he said, "that he is a little recovered. The doctor has bled him, and consciousness is in a measure returned, and he thinks that if the poor fellow is kept very quiet for some time he will do well; but it was a terrible blow, tell me how it happened."

Then Percy related to him with a shudder, how the sad event occurred, not sparing him-

self in the least. "If God in His great mercy raises Arthur to life again," he added, "I shall even then, always look upon myself in the light of a murderer, for it will be only owing to His goodness that I have been spared this great misery, as my hand had left him like one dead."

Percy's tears, which had seemed frozen before, here rained down his cheeks. "We have been like brothers, sir, all our lives," he sobbed, "and that my passionate temper should first make me jealous of him, and then almost kill him, seems too dreadful."

"Well," said Dr. Reid, "I hope and believe that this terrible accident will be a lesson to you through life; for, 'if he who hateth his brother, be a murderer,' how awful is it to give way to anger, for when you are blinded by passion you know not what mischief you may do."

Arthur got better slowly; he was not allowed to read much, or to exert himself in any way, for having received a slight contusion of the head, it was thought better that he should be kept quiet for a time. Directly school was over, every day Percy went to Arthur's room, instead of playing with the other boys, and read some interesting book to him, or talked to him, or sometimes they had a quiet walk together, and they became faster friends than ever they had been before. But what hum-

bled Percy most was the receiving the prize at the end of the half year. That which had been the height of his ambition, now came almost like a punishment to him. He took it to his friend. "You know it ought to be yours," he said; "if it had not been for my barbarity you would have easily won it from me."

"I don't think that is at all likely," replied Arthur. "I am very glad you have it, and next half I hope we shall try again who will be first; but without being jealous of one another."

"I trust I am cured of that as long as I live," said Percy; "for surely if I am ever tempted, conscience will bring before me that I am the most wicked person living."

And Percy never forgot the solemn lesson he received. Whenever he was inclined to take offence, the thought of his friend, struck down by his own act, lying dead (as he imagined) before him, would flash across his eyes, and he would be still and quiet in a moment. As he grew on in life, and people spoke of his sweet temper, his gentleness and humility, and how impossible it was to exasperate him, they little dreamed of his early struggles, and that it was through much tribulation and trial that he at last became the conqueror over his temper. And it required a very heavy judgment, before he "let patience have her perfect work."



THE SNARE OF VANITY.

Seventh Commandment.

"Beauty is as summer fruits which are easy to corrupt, and cannot last."

"That is the best part of beauty which a picture cannot express."

SOPHY Page might well be called by her father "the apple of his eye," she was his only child, and he doted upon her with all the love of his warm heart. His wife also was not behind him in her devotion to her daughter, she fancied there never was one more beautiful, or for the matter of that, more clever. There might be people who were more learned, she thought, but no one who could turn her knowledge to such good account.

The parents had kept Sophy at a boarding-school as long as they could, that she might have an education superior to that of other country girls, but unfortunately she only acquired a

taste for love stories, and the cheap literature of the day, which she perused in great abundance, and such parts of the tales as she thought her father and mother would like to hear, she read out to them of an evening.

Her father had a very small farm of his own, which he was just able to manage himself, with the aid of a boy, and now and then, in busy times, a little friendly help from a neighbour, so that they were above want; Mrs. Page was an industrious little woman, who churned the milk of their two cows, waited upon the pigs, and attended to the poultry and garden. Sophy was some help to her mother, of course, but she did not like soiling her pretty white hands with dirty work, nor were her parents desirous she should do so, for they were almost as proud of her beauty as she was herself. It was a great pity that the glass told Sophy so plainly that she was good-looking, for her loveliness was so remarkable, that, between ourselves, it made her a little conceited. No one could pass her without turning round and giving her a second glance. She had that rare beauty of large dark eyes, and dark softly pencilled eyebrows, with glossy flaxen hair, which are so seldom seen combined, and which, set off by a fair complexion, and warmed with a bright colour in the rounded cheeks, cannot fail of pleasing all tastes.

A person must be a stoic indeed who could see her approach, with her light figure and elastic step, and happy smile, without being struck with her; and while she had gained a smattering of knowledge with a great deal of vanity and folly, at the second-class boarding school to which her father had been foolish enough to send her; she had also acquired a certain degree of refinement of manner, and propriety in expressing herself, which gave an additional charm to her whole person.

It must not be thought that Sophy had attained the age of twenty without being asked in marriage by some eligible man. Most of the young fellows in the village had tried to soften her obdurate heart, but without success. The truth was, she hoped to raise her position in life by making a grand match, and thought that her beauty ought to secure to her a fine rich husband. Her father and mother were very worthy, simple sort of people, who had no idea of the ambitious dreams which were floating about their daughter's head, or they would have warned her of the danger and folly of them, but they were well content that she should not be in a hurry to marry, that they might enjoy their treasure a little longer to themselves.

There was one of Sophy's suitors to whom Page and his wife both hoped that she might

in time "seriously incline her ear," for they knew him to be a good and conscientious man, who would try to make his wife happy. He was situated in about the same grade in life as themselves, and also cultivated a little land of his own, but Sophy thought John Harrison very humdrum and common-place, and moreover shockingly old, for he was very nearly forty. She had no objection to a little admiration, in fact, she was so accustomed to it, that she always expected it, and received it as her due. Her manner was very soft and pleasant, and she gave such gentle and kind denials to her wooers, that she attracted them towards her in spite of her hard heart, and as she did not seem to prefer one before another, they all waited upon her beck and call, each hoping that in the end he should be the lucky man.

Sophy always walked demurely between her father and mother to church, and when they reached the porch, there were her admirers standing, hoping to get a glance from her; she would raise her long eyelashes for a minute, and a rosy flush would flit across her face, while she smiled her salutation to each, taking care not to distinguish one before the other.

The little village of Summerhill was the admiration of all the country round for its picturesque situation, and the beauty of the village itself, the cottages being dotted about

on both sides of a river, surrounded by gardens and orchards, and sheltered by a precipitous hill rising towards the north. Page's farm-house (if it may be called by so grand a name) stood a little apart from the other dwellings, it was built on the side of the hill, behind it rose a belt of handsome trees, and in front sloped two or three green fields, at the bottom of which flowed the river; and its rustic bridge, and the old church standing near, with the clustering white houses, formed such a pretty picture, that many artists frequented the spot in order to transfer the scene to canvass.

The town of Upton was about four miles off, and during the summer months many pic-nic parties were made to Summerhill, and the gentry would often induce Mrs. Page to let them have tea under her rural verandah, where her thick cream and fragrant butter were highly commended; whether the pretty Sophy came in for her share of admiration, we leave it for all lovers of beauty to guess. Mrs. Page was always very careful that not the slightest familiarity should mix with her politeness to her guests on these occasions; she had too much respect for herself not to show it to others also, she was satisfied with her own lot in life, and had no wish to endeavour to lessen the distance between herself and those

above her in rank and station. Sophy's manner was quite as distant as her own, but Mrs. Page little thought that under her daughter's drooping eyelids there was frequently a gay vision passing of some bright future in store for her, when a lofty marriage would raise her far above her present lowly condition.

One day, just as Mrs. Page had finished her work, and put on her afternoon gown, and Sophy, who was always neat, was sewing in front of the house, two carriages drove up, containing eight happy looking people, who were come to visit the far-famed village of Summerhill. A nice looking lady put her head out of the window of the first carriage.

"How do you do, Mrs. Page?" said she, "we are come, a large party, to see your pretty place, and to know if you will let us have tea in your garden?"

Mrs. Page curtseyed to the lady, whom she had seen before, and said "she would be very happy to wait upon them;" so all the company dismounted, the coachman drove the large carriage to the inn below, just by the bridge, but the phaeton Mrs. Page said she could make room for in their yard, if the gentleman would be so kind as to drive it there. But she had to repeat her words before he attended to what she said, his eyes were intently fixed upon a graceful figure standing in the back-

ground, clad in a dress of pale grey of some soft texture, which fell in flowing lines around her slight elegant form, and was finished off at the neck and wrists by a knot of pink ribbon. He started when Mrs. Page again begged him to drive to the yard, which was at the back of the house, and saw that she was holding open the gate for him to do so, then he immediately obeyed her injunctions.

"Poor gentleman, how deaf he is," thought the simple-minded woman, as she helped him to unfasten the buckles of the harness and put the horse in the stable, for the boy was gone with her husband to finish carrying the hay.

When Mrs. Page and the gentleman returned from the yard, they found the rest of the party just starting to take a stroll round the village, and to admire the view from the top of the hill, and they promised to be back in an hour's time to have tea at the cottage. Mrs. Page pitied the poor deaf gentleman again, for he stood with the door of the house in his hand, looking with a wistful gaze inside where her daughter had just entered, and not seeming to hear the departing footsteps of his party.

"The company are all gone, sir," she cried in rather a loud voice, for she thought he would be annoyed to miss them.

He flushed very red, and thanking her, he ran off to join the others.

Now Mrs. Page put the large kettle on the fire to boil, and she and Sophy brought the long table and placed it under the shadow of the verandah, and covered it with the whitest of tablecloths, the best tea-set was produced, and a delicious dish of early strawberries gathered, which with its accompaniment of rich cream, looked very inviting; some light cakes and capital bread and butter completed the repast, with the exception of a vase of freshly gathered flowers, which Sophy placed in the centre of the table, and whose delicate fragrance might be said to waft an appetite over the whole. Sophy stood for a minute considering whether there was anything wanting to complete her handy work, and then she tied up eight pretty bouquets, and put one in each plate. Her mother here came out of the door.

"Well, my dear," said she, "you have taken pains to make it look nice, and the gentlefolks must be particular indeed if they are not pleased. Oh, here they come. I hope, ladies, you liked the view on the top of the hill behind our cottage; people find their way from a long distance on purpose to see it."

They all assured her that they were not surprised at that, for they thought it charming, and the gentleman with the dark hair added "that though it was so charming, they

had seen nothing so lovely as the scene before them."

His eyes were fixed upon Sophy as he spoke, whose colour deepened ; but Mrs. Page understood him to mean the tea-table arrangements, and said she was glad they liked her daughter's decoration, and then they all sat down and were very merry and happy. The roses and honeysuckles clustered over their heads, and fringed the edge of the verandah ; it seemed a sort of fairy land, and Sophy like a goddess, who condescended to wait upon the poor mortals. She attended with her usual modesty, but not quite with her usual self-possession ; she never looked up, yet she felt that one gentleman was constantly regarding her every movement, and a sensation, hitherto unknown to her, agitated her bosom. She listened when they addressed him. One lady called him "Edward," and a gentleman applied to him for some information about fishing.

"Meredith, don't you think that by the bridge, where the river ripples over the large stones, it would be a good place to find trout ?"

So now Sophy knew his name, that was something gained. As she passed by the back of his chair, he asked her in a low voice, "if she had arranged his bouquet ?" for he wanted to have a glance into her beautiful eyes. She then saw him detach one sprig of myrtle from

the rest, and place it in his waistcoat-pocket, and the other flowers he pinned to his button-hole. But all excitements come to an end at last, and Sophy, as the last carriage drove out of sight, gave a deep sigh, for she felt in her inmost heart that somehow this day would give a colouring to her whole life. Her father now came home, having just finished stacking his last load of hay.

"We have had quite a company of gentle-folks here," said his wife; "and one poor gentleman was amongst them who was extremely deaf, which is a sad pity, as I hear he has a large fortune, and is heir to a fine estate."

"Well, wife, let's come in now and have a bit of supper, and go to bed, for I am very tired," said her husband.

After supper Mr. Page read a chapter in the Bible, without which he never lay down to rest. But Sophy could not attend, she was thinking of the tall handsome gentleman, with his dark hair and his curling moustache, who had cast upon her such tender admiring glances.

The next morning, as she was feeding some chickens, of which she had undertaken the care, in a half-absent, preoccupied manner; for, if the truth must be told, she was trying to settle to her own satisfaction, whether Mr.

Meredith was remembering her at that time or not, when she raised her eyes, and, lo ! there he was in bodily presence, leaning over the gate just before her. Her cheeks became suffused with crimson, and he walked instantly forward.

“ Good morning, Miss Sophy,” he said, holding out his hand, which she could not avoid taking. It was the first time their hands had met. She felt his tremble, and an electric shock seemed to shoot to her own heart, as if a mysterious sympathy had passed between them. What he might have said next it is impossible to say, as Mrs. Page came bustling out with the milkpans in her hand, which she had been scouring, and now put in the sunshine to dry. Mr. Meredith addressed himself to her.

“ I am come again, Mrs. Page, for I was so pleased with the look of your trout-stream yesterday evening, that I want to try if I cannot catch a dish of fish ; and I thought, perhaps, you could tell me which part of the river was considered most successful by the lovers of the piscatory art.”

“ Well,” she answered, “ many gentlemen think by the bridge is the best place for fishing ; but, as the sun shines brightly, I think a little lower down, under the willows would, perhaps, be a more likely place for the trout to bite. I would send the boy with you, but

this is a busy time here in the hayfield. Sophy, will you show the gentleman the way to the turn in the river?"

Mr. Meredith felt his heart throb violently at this proposal; but he said, with some duplicity, "that he should be sorry to give her so much trouble."

She gently replied, that "it was no trouble," and went to put on her hat, her mother following to tell her, "not to go too far, for it did not do for girls to be seen with such a fine gentleman; perhaps I ought not to have suggested it."

And this doubt kept troubling her mind for some time, though she thought herself very silly for allowing such an idea to enter her head. Ah! if she knew what a dangerous intimacy was begun between the young people, she would rather have sent her daughter to the farthest end of the earth, than have allowed her to see any more of this handsome young man. Meantime the lovers, (for so I fear they must be called) walked slowly down the fields that led to the river. They were both silent, for Sophy's heart was too full for speech, and Edward Meredith could hardly believe his good fortune in being alone with this beautiful creature. He thought she looked more fresh and lovely than ever this morning, with her light-blue print dress so neatly made,

her black scarf and jaunty straw-hat, with its blue ribbons just shading the upper part of the face, and letting the sunlight dance and flicker on those rosy lips and dimpled chin. He attempted some sort of compliment on her appearance, but it died away in an inarticulate murmur; it seemed to him almost profanation to attempt to praise what was so far above all praise. So they talked commonplaces, of the beauty of the day, and the fineness of the scenery; and while to all appearance their intercourse seemed as simple and innocent as the day, each was inhaling large draughts of love, which could never be obliterated or effaced.

Directly Sophy had led Mr. Meredith to the brook indicated by her mother, she left him to his sport; and such is the power of modesty that he did not dare detain her, though he longed to do so, but was obliged to content himself with asking her to beg her mother to allow him to have luncheon at their cottage, where he would come at one o'clock.

After Sophy had gone a little way she could not forbear turning her head, to see whether he had begun fishing. And there he was, just as she had left him, gazing after her departing figure; he raised his hat, and she walked on more quickly, annoyed with herself for looking back. When she reached her home

she found her mother watching for her, rather anxiously.

"Oh! here you are, my dear," she exclaimed. "Well, you have not been long; and what a nice colour you have brought with you. I was just thinking that, perhaps, it was not right of me to ask you to walk down the fields with the young gentleman; but he seems to be a very quiet inoffensive man."

"Yes very, mother; and he told me to ask you to let him have luncheon here at one o'clock."

"We have only bread and cheese to offer him, dear; he had better have it in the garden under the tree, for he would not much fancy the smell of our bacon and greens in the house, I expect."

And very captivating the simple repast looked to the tired fisherman, when he made his appearance at the cottage. And with such a Hebe to pour out his glass of beer for him, he felt in Paradise!

Edward Meredith won Page's heart by smoking a pipe with him, and giving him some of his superior birds'-eye tobacco, also by praising his cows and pigs; so that when he said on going away, that he should like to come the next day and take a sketch from their cottage of the pretty valley before them, the old man said he should be glad to see him.

This time he arrived on horseback, bringing his drawing materials with him and a roll of canvass ; for it was his ambition to take Sophy's portrait, and he asked her permission to do so, as she flitted past him, when he was supposed to be deeply engaged with his drawing.

"It is with the greatest diffidence I ask this great favour," he said ; "for I know how incompetent I am to the delightful task of transferring such angelic features to canvass ; but the attempt would be such a pleasure to me, that I hope you will not refuse."

Sophy replied with a palpitating heart, that if her father and mother saw no objection she should make none. And then Mr. Meredith ventured to show her the sprig of myrtle which he had taken out of her bouquet, carefully pressed between the leaves of his pocket-book. She gave one bewitching glance, and then like a startled deer flew away to join her mother in the house, leaving her admirer enchanted with her sweetness, her beauty, and her modesty. She must be his wife, he thought, could he ever find one he should love more, or who was more lovely ? But then his father hoped to make a very high match for his son ; would he consent to his bringing home a simple country maiden, the daughter of a small simple country farmer, to rule his house ? If he could

only see her, the young man imagined, all his objections must vanish away, and therewith he drew a charming castle in the air of his father suddenly beholding the sweet Sophy, and entreating his son to fall in love with her, and marry her as quickly as he could.

The young man roused himself with a sigh ; this dream had not come to pass as yet, in the meantime he would make the best use of his opportunities. He was sly enough not to ask the old couple whether he might take their daughter's likeness, until he had finished the drawing of the valley, which they admired so much, that he promised to make a copy for them. He then advanced his request to paint Sophy's portrait, in the most ordinary and careless manner he could assume ; and to his great joy they immediately agreed to his request, being flattered with the implied compliment, "Though to be sure," added the mother, "I fear it will make her sadly vain."

Mr. Meredith concealed his satisfaction with great difficulty, and settled that he had better come early the following day to have the advantage of the light ; and he begged Sophy to put on that grey dress in which he first saw her, as he thought there could not be one more becoming to her. And now began that hazardous experiment between two young persons of different sexes, when one is allowed to

gaze at the other for long periods without offence being taken or rudeness implied, and when every grace and elegant movement is taken into the heart and worshipped there, before it is attempted to be conveyed to canvass.

Edward Meredith sometimes looked so long at the fair object before him, that he forgot to use his brush, and made but slow progress in his painting. Mrs. Page had so much on her hands, that she could not remain long in the room at a time; but she often popped in, and was always pleased with the picture; nor did any suspicion of danger to her beloved daughter cross her mind, for the young man's manner was always so quiet and respectful that she thought him as safe as the church, and her daughter she hoped was too steadily brought up, and knew her station too well to allow her mind to dwell upon him.

Mr. Meredith was a very tolerable artist, and his portrait of Sophy was an exceedingly creditable performance, though he was far from being satisfied with it himself. He had allowed Sophy to keep her eyes cast down, while he was drawing the figure and general shape of the head; in fact he rather liked her doing so, as he then had courage to gaze at her long and fixedly without being observed; but now, on the third sitting, he was arrived at the

face, and he was obliged to ask her to raise her wondrous eyes, that he might try to copy them.

What a moment was that, when shyly and bashfully she lifted her lids and looked as he directed, her conscious eyes directed fully towards him; something he saw there made him tremble, and with a sudden impulse he threw his brush from him, and casting himself on the ground before her, he poured out all his love, his admiration and respect, and prayed her to tell him if it were possible she could return his love, and one day become his wife.

Need we say what answer she returned to his ardent pleadings? She owned with trembling lips the warm affection that was overflowing her tender heart, and vows of mutual love were exchanged between the two lovers, and promises of constancy which were never to be broken.

Mr. Meredith owned to her that their engagement must be kept a secret for the present, as it would take some time to induce his father to consent to his marriage with his darling Sophy, for he was very anxious that his son should make a good match, and had already looked out a lady of high rank, and possessing every accomplishment under the sun, who he thought must prove irresistible. "But," added Edward Meredith, "if he could only see my So-

phy, he would be taken captive by her grace and beauty as I am, and agree to my following my own wishes in a matter which, after all, chiefly concerns my own happiness."

And Sophy believed him, she felt herself able to charm any one into admiring her, and then Edward was so delightful, that she thought no man could be so unkind as to refuse him any thing he had set his heart upon.

So the days slipped by rapturously, and only too swiftly to the happy pair; the only drawback being the care that was required to keep their love a secret from Page and his wife, whose probity and uprightness would be in arms if they suspected their daughter was permitting a clandestine attachment to fix itself in her mind with a gentleman so much above her in rank. But Sophy consoled herself for her deceitfulness by thinking that when her dear Edward arrived with his father's consent to their marriage, how joyfully her parents would then view her exaltation.

The portrait was at last finished, Meredith could not discover that another touch was wanting to complete the exquisite picture, and he took it back with him to Upton, saying he should have it framed, and then show it them again.

He had not left them more than three hours, when as Sophy was walking in the garden, a

boy came and slipped a note into her hand, which turned out to be a very hurried line from Edward Meredith, to say that when he reached Upton, he found a telegraphic message had arrived for him, with the intelligence that his father was very ill, and begged him to return home at once. So he was obliged to start directly, and he feared it would be some time before he saw her again, but though he must not venture to write to her, still he was sure she would believe that no power could make him change his affection for her.

Sophy could not suppress a thrill of joy, as she thought that if his father died, he would then be his own master, and able to do as he liked, but she checked the unworthy feeling instantly, and began to imagine how dull it would seem without the daily presence of her lover's handsome face.

This she was obliged to endure day after day, and week after week, and even months passed away, and still she heard no tidings of Edward Meredith. Poor Sophy became pale and anxious, she tried to fancy that he was endeavouring to soften his father's heart, but doubts would intrude upon her mind in spite of all her efforts, and the more so as she had no one whom she could consult in her perplexity.

The winter passed away with its dark, cold,

dreary days, and spring returned, genial and bright, but it could not bring back brightness to Sophy's pensive cheek.

One day the lady who had accompanied Edward Meredith on his first visit to Summerhill, came again with a party to enjoy a little pic-nic at Mrs. Page's cottage, and Sophy hovered about, hoping, yet dreading to hear news of her truant knight. And suddenly she found her mother was asking the lady "whether she had lately seen that kind gentleman Mr. Meredith?" her heart seemed to stand still while she listened for the answer, which came with terrible distinctness.

"You will be glad, Mrs. Page, to hear that he is shortly going to make a very happy marriage; his father has been ill, but is now recovering, and then there will be nothing to delay the wedding, which gives satisfaction to all parties."

Sophy's head appeared to swim round, but she managed to creep up to her room and throw herself on the bed, and she uttered no sound, excepting now and then a moan which escaped from her unawares, and how long she remained there she could not tell, for time passed unheeded. At last her mother having bidden adieu to her guests, missed Sophy, and came up stairs to see what had become of her. She was shocked to find her daughter looking

very ill, with a feverish colour in her cheeks, and an unnatural brightness in her eyes; she gave incoherent replies to her mother's questions, who became seriously alarmed, and begged her husband to go at once for the doctor.

Poor Sophy remained in a dangerous state for several weeks, but a good constitution prevailed over the disease, and at the end of that time she came down, looking the shadow of her former self.

Mrs. Page told her how kind the neighbours had been in calling to inquire after her, and bringing her little delicacies they thought she might fancy. "John Harrison has called here daily to ask after you, my dear."

"Do you think he loves me still, mother?"

"Yes, Sophy, I am sure he does; should you like to see him when he comes next?"

Sophy answered, "Yes," in a low voice. And Mrs. Page, like a wise woman, said no more, though she rejoiced to imagine that at last her daughter appreciated the good man's qualities; while Sophy's vain desire was, that Edward Meredith should not fancy she was pining for him, and she determined that if possible her marriage should take place before his.

So when John Harrison arrived, she received him very kindly, and he thought her soft manner and pale thin cheeks more inter-

esting than she was even in the full radiance of her beauty. A little encouragement soon brought him to declare all his fondness for her, which she allowed him to think was returned, and as soon as she was strong enough they were married.

It was a very quiet wedding, poor Sophy still looked delicate, and seemed very grave, but she made the responses in a calm, firm voice, and her father and mother trusted that a happy, peaceful life was in store for their darling.

About ten days after the marriage, Sophy was walking slowly along the fields that led to her mother's cottage, she was resolving that she would put away for ever all her idle and vain dreams, and try to make John Harrison a good and affectionate wife, when as she came to the gate at the end of a thick hedge, which concealed all persons approaching that way, she suddenly found herself facing Edward Meredith, he had just opened the gate, and stood therefore close to her, so there was no escape. They both started, and remained looking at one another, as if the grave had given up its dead; and after a silence, which Sophy could not summon courage to break, she heard, to her astonishment, Mr. Meredith reproaching her in agitated tones, for her fickleness, and inconstancy, and want of candour, in uniting

herself with another, when she had plighted her troth to him.

Sophy managed to gasp out, "Are not you married then?"

"No," he replied; "I am not so base; my father was very desirous that I should be united to a very amiable young lady, to whom I could make no objection, saving that my love was already given to a good girl who I thought loved me in return; I told this to my father, believing it to be true, and came here to-day to say that we must still have patience, and now you have put an insuperable obstacle to our union, I find you have been only deceiving me all this time, and that as soon as I was out of sight you cared for me no longer."

Sophy was stung to the quick, and poured forth in a passionate flow her unchangeable love for him, her despair when she heard he was shortly to be married, her illness, and her wild wicked deed in giving her hand to John Harrison, when she had no heart to bestow, rather than let Edward guess her wretchedness.

It was a terrible scene, their good angels must have veiled their faces with sorrow, and left the powers of darkness to the mastery. In a moment of madness, Edward Meredith proposed to Sophy to fly with him, and alas! she consented. She felt as if it would now be

impossible to return to her former life. How easy the Devil makes sin to those who are inclined to commit it !

Edward's carriage was close by, so that they were at Upton directly, there the train was just starting for London, no time was allowed the guilty pair for reflection or repentance. Before the fever fit of excitement was over, they had rushed away from every acknowledged duty to God and man, and not all the after penitence of their lives could soften the consequences of their sad precipitous act.

At first Sophy fancied herself happy, but conscience (even in the most hardened) will not sleep for ever, and Sophy was not a hardened sinner, and very soon she awoke to the heinousness of her sin ; the horrible thought of her husband's anguish when he had sought everywhere for her, and found she had really left him ; and her father and mother's grief at their daughter's shame, haunted her day and night.

She could never get rid of a heavy dread that some misfortune had befallen her parents, it weighed upon her, and made her eye dim, and her steps slow and languid. She saw too that Edward was far from happy, which added to her grief ; he already bitterly repented having tempted Sophy to sin, for he was in the main a conscientious man, and felt deep sor-

row that he had yielded to temptation in a moment of passion; he could not see the end of the awful step he had taken, or decide what was right for him to do; but he knew that the present state of things could not go on long, so he was often gloomy and abstracted for hours together, and would rouse himself with an effort.

He never ventured to speak to Sophy of her father and mother, or allude to her husband, and Sophy felt too guilty for such honoured names to pass her lips. It made a restraint between them to have forbidden subjects upon which they were afraid of touching, for there never can be true felicity without perfect confidence, therefore they both acknowledged in their own minds, that as far as regarded their happiness in this world, they had made a mistake.

One morning, about three months after these events, Sophy was dressing herself with a heavy heart, and catching a view of herself in the glass, she thought how different this careworn, melancholy creature looked, with the dark rims under the eyes, and the pale thin face, to the bright innocent girl of only a year ago, the apple of her father's eye, and the delight of all the country round. But the serpent had crept in and destroyed the beauty of Eden. She cast down her eyes with a sigh,

and for the first time she observes a packet directed to herself on the table, it is in Edward's handwriting; to seize it and tear it open is the work of a moment, out fall a number of bank notes, but all she cares for is the letter, it was this:—

“MY EVER DEAR SOPHY,

“I dare not wish you good-bye except by letter, for I know my courage would fail if I saw you before me, and I should weakly remain with you, only to regret my want of resolution, and to make fresh endeavours for the future. I can see plainly, my poor Sophy, that you are no better satisfied with our sinful life than I am myself, and there seems no way of ending it but by my leaving you. I pray GOD I do right, and that He will accept our penitence, and grant that we may meet hereafter in His Kingdom.

“Farewell, dear Sophy, if you can ever forgive the misery I have brought upon you, my soul will be relieved of a terrible burden. A useful life is still open to us both, and will, I trust, bring us some comfort in time. Enclosed are £50, and the same sum will be forwarded to you every half-year; if you are ever in any difficulty be sure to let me know.

“E. M.”

The letter slipped through Sophy's fingers,

she rushed down stairs, Edward was not there, he was gone, she should never see him again. She felt faint, but she did not give way to it, or stop to think; she would go to her father and mother, even if they spurned her from their door, she would see them once again, and give one hungry look at their dear faces. So she put on the dress in which she had left her home, and collecting the bank notes together, she placed them in an envelope and directed it to Edward Meredith. She also wrote a few lines thanking him for the money, but saying that she should not want it, as she was going to her mother. She added that if he thought he had any need of forgiveness from her, she sent it him with her whole heart, but that her wretchedness was the effect of her own crime and weakness.

She then sealed the packet, and instantly started on her long journey, for she was too agitated and feverish to wait a moment. When she stepped out at the door a cold east wind blew against her, and drove a drizzling rain pitilessly in her face; she shuddered, but walked swiftly on; it is right, she thought, in the unnatural excitement that was upon her, it is fit that I should begin my penance from this moment.

So she walked on, and on, until she left great London behind her, and the suburbs

were passed, and then there was a space without any houses, and Sophy became quite exhausted, for she had taken no breakfast that morning, and now it was mid-day, and the wind and rain had cooled her fevered pulse, and she felt she could go no further, so she ventured to tap gently at a tidy looking cottage door. A bustling woman came, who, when she saw poor Sophy's dripping dress, and heard her ask for a piece of bread in a low voice, she bade her "begone for an impudent hussy, she was not going to give her honest bread to all the fine madams who came out of town, and thought they might get any thing for the asking."

Sophy turned slowly away, she felt chilled to the very bone, and hardly able to drag her faint and tired limbs after her. I shall die, she thought with agony, before I have seen my father and mother, and I dare not ask mercy of God until they have forgiven me. She was roused from this sad reverie, by hearing a rough, good-natured voice say,

"Why, missus, how mortal bad you do look to be sure; what is the matter?"

She raised her eyes, and saw the broad open face of a plough-boy peering at her from under his wide-awake hat, from which the rain fell off in little rivulets; he carried a pitchfork over his shoulder, and a hunch of bread and

cheese in his hand, which he was munching with great satisfaction.

"I am cold and hungry," she almost sobbed.

The boy poked the bread and cheese towards her, "Eat that," he said, "and come to mother's cottage and have a warm, your clothes are all wet through, and your bonnet looks no how."

She followed her guide to a house not far off, and heard him say,

"Mother, I have brought you a poor creature almost starved to death, for you to doctor."

And a pleasant dreamy sort of feeling came over Sophy, she remembered no more until she found herself in a warm comfortable bed, with a kind-looking woman standing over her, holding a basin of gruel ready for her to drink.

"Where am I?" said Sophy; "oh, I ought to be going home."

"You stay still," insisted the good woman, "you have been in a faint like, and seem very tired, so swallow this warm gruel, and then go to sleep, for you won't get up any more to-day, I can tell you."

Sophy did as she was bid, in fact she was too stiff and ill to have been able to move, if she had attempted it, and she slept on until the sun was high in the heavens the following

day. Then she started up in haste, and dressed herself quickly in the clothes which had been carefully dried for her, and nothing could induce her to rest any longer; indeed she seemed in such a nervous fidget to be gone, that her kind hostess did not like to say much to dissuade her from her determination.

"Well, my dear," she said, "if your mother is expecting you, perhaps she will be anxious if you don't appear, but I hope you have not far to go, for you look very pale and weak."

She was not contented with making Sophy eat a good breakfast, but she put her up a little parcel of provisions for her to carry with her. Sophy's eyes filled with tears as she thanked her for all her kindness.

"You know not what a blessed deed yours has been, the saving of my life," she said; "it has been preserved, I trust, for a good purpose."

The good woman looked after her till she was out of sight. "Poor thing," she exclaimed, "I hope she will get safe home; but she seems very shaky, and I don't like that nasty cough, nor those white thin cheeks; I fear she is not long for this world. Well," she continued, as she walked into her house, "I am glad I helped her; people say that one ought to be very careful as to whom one relieves, but after all, it is better to be taken

in once or twice, than to refuse a deserving object."

Sophy got on better to-day, the weather was dry, which was a comfort to her, but she suffered pain in her limbs from exposure to the wet and cold the day before, and her cough troubled her very much; she soon was dreadfully tired, but was afraid of travelling by railroad lest she should meet any one she knew, so she crept on slowly; once she had a lift of several miles in a market-gardener's cart; one night she took refuge in the hollow of a hayrick, as she could not get admittance into a dwelling; sometimes people were kind to her, and at other times gave her rough language, but she bore it meekly; "they cannot say worse of me than I deserve," she thought.

At last, at the close of the third day after leaving London, the well remembered village came in sight in which she had spent many happy years of her short life. She stole up the familiar path to her father's cottage, her heart throbbing painfully with excitement and melancholy forebodings; she reaches the house, a light shines from one of the windows, she steadies her trembling knees and looks in, there is her mother, her dear loving mother, but how unlike her usually cheerful, busy mother,—she is dressed in deep black, her head is sunk on the table, and buried in her

hands. Sophy could look no longer, she ran to the door, all her fatigue forgotten, and at once lifting the latch threw herself on the floor with her face to the ground.

"Mother, mother," she cried, "have pity on your wretched, sinful daughter."

Mrs. Page uttered an exclamation of joy and surprise, and raised Sophy in her arms, and they mingled their tears together. At last Sophy ventured to glance at her mother's beloved face, and saw, with a start of horror, that she wore a widow's cap.

"My father," she screamed, "I have then killed him!"

"Hush, my darling," said Mrs. Page, "he sank gradually away, and died a very calm, peaceful death, sending you his forgiveness and blessing."

But Sophy seemed almost convulsed, there was a gurgling noise in her throat, and then a crimson stream flowed from her lips,—the shock was too great for her in her weak state, she had broken a blood-vessel.

It was some time before the hemorrhage could be stopped, and then the doctor said that her lungs were very much affected, and that the mischief was going on so rapidly, that it was beyond his power to cure; he ordered her to be kept very quiet, for another such attack would prove instantly fatal.

It was very sad for the poor mother, just as her daughter was restored to her, to feel that she must prepare herself for parting with her for ever. Still she could not be too thankful that it was permitted her to watch over poor Sophy's dying bed, for Edward Meredith had been to Summerhill that morning to inquire if Sophy had returned home, and was almost distracted with grief when he learnt that she had not been seen, for he feared some harm had happened to her; therefore when she arrived so humble and contrite, Mrs. Page acknowledged how much cause she had for gratitude, even though her dear one was only spared to her for so short a time.

Sophy set herself diligently to prepare for that better country, towards which she was hastening so fast; she saw the clergyman most days, when her cough permitted of her speaking, and confessed to him all her guilt. She saw that vanity was at the root of her sin, and had brought all this misery upon herself and others, and the clergyman was quite satisfied of the reality and depth of her repentance. He felt that her sins which were many were forgiven her, for she loved much, and had also suffered much.

One day Sophy gave a letter to Mrs. Page which she begged her to give to Edward Meredith when she was dead. "And you must

not blame him, dear mother," she added, "for what has happened, the consequences were of my own bringing, and I might not have had courage to leave off sinning if he had not helped me."

"I will not be hard upon him, dear Sophy, for he is very much cast down at your illness, and comes continually to learn how you are, but I thought you had rather not see him."

"No, mother, I would rather that nothing earthly should disturb me now; but there is one person I should like to ask forgiveness of."

"I know who you mean, my darling, and I am sure John Harrison would wish to assure you of his free pardon for your offence against him, for he has often said so to me."

So the faint shadow of the former blooming Sophy saw her good religious husband once more, and after the interview she remained in a happy peaceful state, from which she was roused by a fit of coughing more violent than usual. Alas! a blood-vessel was broken, and before assistance came, her spirit had departed, and the mortal had passed on to immortality.

Edward Meredith was deeply affected at poor Sophy's sad end, it remained to him a solemn warning for all his after life.

Let us never forget to check the beginning of sin, for one sin brings misery to so many

persons, and leaves a black spot in the soul, which if allowed to remain, spreads more and more till the whole is tainted. We must watch well, "lest Satan should get the advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his devices."



HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.

Eighth Commandment.

“ 'Tis good to be honest and true.”

JOSEPH King was the son of the village blacksmith, he rejoiced in half a score of brothers and sisters, their ages varying from about sixteen to two and a half years. They all scrambled on pretty well: the eldest boy took to the blacksmith's trade after his father's example; the girl, who was fifteen, went to the Rectory as under-nurserymaid; but Joseph who came next was the only one who showed an antipathy to work, he seemed to possess a natural aversion to it, and would prefer making his dinner off a turnip picked up in a field, to employing his time in a useful manner, so as to earn a good meal. Of course this was the fruitful source of many blows and scoldings from the father and mother; but he appeared incorrigible.

Mrs. King was lamenting his idleness one day in loud tones, and telling him that he would come to no good, when Miss Elston entered, who was the daughter of the Squire, a most excellent young lady, who was always going about doing good in the parish, and who never thought the smallest trouble of any of its inhabitants below her notice.

"Why, Mrs. King, what is the matter?" she said, looking from the angry mother to the sullen sulky boy; "has Joseph been taken before the magistrates again for stealing turnips?"

"No, miss, but I tell him he will come to worse than that, for he will never do an hour's work if he can help it, and we all know what must be the end of that; first want, then dishonesty, then robbery, and after that most likely transportation."

"Well, Mrs. King, we must hope that Joseph will not arrive at quite so bad an end of his earthly career. But, Joseph, what makes you dislike work so much? Cannot you get any to suit your taste? What do you say to coming to help me in my garden? I am going to plant my spring bulbs, and that cannot be called a very severe employment."

"Thank you, ma'am, I should like that," said Joseph, and the bargain was soon completed; he was to come the next day, and be-

gin gardening. At first all went merrily, Miss Elston set him to work, and gave him a large basket of crocus-roots, half of them were white, the others were lilac, and he was to plant them very carefully, half-a-dozen of each in a bunch, round the outside of an oval bed. She stood over him for a little while, and was pleased with the quick way in which he handled his tools. She then left him, and told him to let her know as soon as he had finished planting the roots. When she was out of sight Joseph stopped and stretched himself, he was already getting tired of his job ; when he looked at the basket still so full of a multitude of little brown knobs, all to be planted in the ground at regular intervals, he grew desperate, and began considering what he could do to expedite matters. Making sure that he could not be seen from the house, he first stuffed his pockets with as many roots as he could cram into them, (for he thought he could get something for them at a gardener's shop in the next town ;) then he dug a deep hole, and shook the remainder of the contents of the basket into it. He raked the bed smooth, and afterwards amused himself with throwing stones at a very tall sunflower, that reared its head in an aggravating manner above its fellows. Just as he had succeeded in knocking it off with a larger stone than usual, and at the same time breaking a pane

of glass in the greenhouse, the clock struck twelve, so he went home to his dinner, remembering whilst there to place his stolen bulbs in a bag, ready to be disposed of at the first opportunity. During dinner he tried to fancy how much he should obtain for his bag of spoils; and as soon as he had finished eating his huge lump of suet-pudding, he set off running to the next town, which was three miles distant, to try and sell the roots. He took them to a respectable seedsman's shop, who, thinking that the bulbs came from the boy's own garden, gave him a price for them, which so far exceeded his expectations, that he returned home overjoyed, determining that as long as he found gardening such a lucrative employment he would cling to it; but that he would not allow himself to be overworked! He felt ashamed certainly to go back to Miss Elston; for though he had wasted no time on the road, it had taken him two hours to go to the town of Morley and back again. However he thought she might not have noticed his absence, so he put a bold face on the matter, and walked in. As ill-luck would have it there she stood, close by the oval bed he had been planting, and evidently on the watch for him.

"Joseph, this is too bad," she began when she saw him approach; "you have been three hours at your dinner; I am afraid you are the

idle boy your mother calls you. But as this is your first day, we will say no more about it now, only remember if you are again such a loiterer, I must send you away without any further warning."

Joseph promised obedience, and professed great repentance. Then Miss Elston handed him a large packet of hyacinth roots, and told him to dig a deep hole in the middle of the same oval bed, where she intended to plant them. He dug with great zeal, as she was looking on; but, unfortunately, a vigorous application of the spade brought to light the immense collection of crocuses he had shaken into the bed, to save himself the trouble of placing them properly round the edge, as he had been directed to do. Joseph was thunder-struck, and Miss Elston was quite shocked at his deceit and laziness; she made him put them in the ground in the manner she at first had ordered him, and then took him into the house and talked to him very seriously, showing him how mean and fraudulent his conduct had been, and how his unworthy artifice would certainly have been found out first or last. She did not know of his thieving propensities, or she would have been afraid of letting him remain about the premises, but she disliked very much giving up any one as hopeless; and though she felt he would be of no

use to her in the garden, as he could not be trusted to do his work properly, she again and again turned over in her own mind what she could do for him. She asked him if he was fond of reading, and finding he liked it pretty well, she told him he might come to her for an hour every morning, and she would try if she could make anything of a scholar of him."

"Perhaps," she said, "you may find it more easy to work with your brains than your hands."

Joseph thought, as he walked home that evening, whether it would not be possible to do both, for he had seen in the room to which Miss Elston had taken him, so many things which he longed to carry off, things that would never be missed in the house, and for which he could so easily find a purchaser, that he was eager for the next day to come, that he might try his skill in relieving the young lady of a few superfluities. He felt in his pockets for some hyacinth roots, which he had managed to secrete although the young lady had been standing close beside him; and he chuckled with delight at the reflection, that though he did not deserve any payment for his bad gardening, he had gained much more than a day's wages by his sleight of hand. "And it's much more fun," he added to himself, "to conjure a trifle out of rich folks' pockets, who don't

feel the loss of it, than to slave all day like my father and brother, and for such a very small return."

So he "strengthened himself in his wickedness," and never remembered the Eye above, which took notice of all his deceit and dishonesty, and before Whom his wicked heart was laid bare, as an open page in a well-lighted room. He now (I grieve to say) began a regular system of petty thieving; he came regularly every day to Miss Elston, and she took great pains with him, and tried to teach him his duty to God and man. Sometimes she thought she had made an impression upon him. Now and then his conscience did prick him when she explained the Commandments to him, and especially that one which says, "Thou shalt not steal," and he would think for a moment whether he was not living in sin; but then the devil would put into his mind, that this happy young lady had everything that she could want, and that she could not appreciate the temptations of a boy, who had to gain his bread by the sweat of his brow, and to whom a small treasure of hers would seem like a fortune. Alas! he did not remember the example set us by our Blessed SAVIOUR, Who had not where to lay His Head, Who laboured with His Hands, Who endured cold, and hunger, and thirst, and

weariness, "Who was in all points tempted like as we are," yet without murmuring, and without sin.

Joseph was very crafty in his knavery; he was careful as to what he took, and how he took it, so that it might not be missed, and that he might not be found out. He would slip into his pocket a penny or two, if there chanced to be a little pile of them on the chimney-piece, or a few stamps from Miss Elston's desk, or even a pencil, or reel of cotton, or a few needles or pins from her work-box, when her back was turned, or she left the room for a moment to fetch a book or anything she wanted. And she had not the least suspicion of his dishonest ways.

One day Miss Elston left him in the sitting-room, while she went for a slate that he might do his sum; and Joseph took the opportunity of quickly glancing at every object near, to see if there was anything he should find profitable to carry away with him, but nothing useful presented itself. There were no halfpence about the room, and only two postage-stamps remained in the desk, and he did not venture to take those; even the needlebook required replenishing. At last, deeper down in one corner of the work-box, he spied something bright; he dived down with his finger, and drew up a gold thimble. He could hardly be-

lieve it to be really gold, and was afraid of taking it, in case he might be found out. However he was obliged (as he thought) to pop it into his pocket, for Miss Elston returned rather suddenly, and he had not an opportunity of putting it back again, as she locked her workbox immediately, and removed it to another table, to make room for Joseph's dinner, which she sometimes allowed him to have here, and which was brought in by her own little maid Mary, a nice young girl, who was always very kind to Joseph, and who stayed chatting with him on the present occasion until he had finished his meal, and when he went away she shut the door after him.

When Joseph had got some distance from the house he looked round on every side, and finding no one was in sight took out the thimble and looked at it carefully. Yes, there was the mark sure enough, it was actually gold! He began to be frightened, it was the most valuable thing he had ever taken, most likely there would be a hue and cry when it was found to be lost, and a grand search made everywhere, and an enquiry of everybody if they had seen it. "Well," he thought, "he could but wait till then, and either slip it back into the box if need be, or sell it to some one a long way off."

Money was "quick come, quick go," with

Joseph. He sold his stolen odds and ends sometimes at one place, and sometimes at another, to avoid suspicion. And then he would go at once to a pastrycook's shop and spend his ill-gotten gains in what he elegantly termed "a regular blow out" of cakes and tarts, so that he was not the richer for his plunder, nor the better, for he looked sallow and unwholesome; nor indeed the happier, for the dread of being found out was always before his eyes, and he could not even enjoy his sweets, for it is stupid work after all to gobble up a lot of nice things by oneself, and he did not dare to take anybody into his confidence.

Time passed on, and Joseph hoped that the loss of the gold thimble would never be discovered, and he began to calculate how much he might hope to get for it—when one morning, as he was shown into Miss Elston's room, he was surprised to see her looking very grave, and her little maid Mary standing before her, crying bitterly.

"I have met with a sad loss, Joseph," she said; "I cannot find my gold thimble, which I know was safe in my workbox a short time ago, and now it is gone; it was given to me by my poor mother, and therefore I value it exceedingly. I suppose you have not seen it anywhere about the room?"

Joseph's tongue seemed glued to the roof of

his mouth, he could not have spoken at that moment to save his life, and he felt that discovery and ruin were staring him in the face. But Miss Elston unconsciously relieved him of his embarrassment by adding almost immediately, "Of course, though, you cannot have seen it, for I have not had my workbox downstairs for several weeks."

"Indeed, indeed, I have not taken it," sobbed poor Mary.

"I am very loath to suspect you, Mary," said Miss Elston; "but you know what our servants say, who have lived with us so many years, and are very kind-hearted women; and having found you out in an untruth before, I do not know how to believe you while appearances are so much against you. I cannot live with a person whom I cannot trust, therefore, I am sorry to say, we must part; but if ever this affair can be cleared up satisfactorily, which will be my earnest endeavour, I will be sure to do you justice. Now go, and tell your mother I will come and talk it over with her in the afternoon."

So poor Mary went away in great grief; and Miss Elston turning to Joseph, told him she had been so disturbed by the sad event of this morning that she could not attend to his lessons, but she lent him a book to learn some spelling from, and told him to come again the

next day. Joseph was glad of this reprieve, for he felt that it would have been impossible for him to have understood a word that was said to him; his thoughts were full of poor Mary and her troubles, she was sent away from her place, her character for honesty gone, and her hopes of getting on in life blighted—for what? For *his* fault! *he* was the guilty one! because he had taken what did not belong to him, this poor girl was punished, and made thus utterly miserable.

Joseph did not know what to do. To confess that he was the culprit was beyond his courage; but he thought that if he had only put the thimble in his pocket, when he went up to the house that morning he might have slipped it down in the room, and it would have been found and nobody have been any wiser; and he determined to do this if possible the next opportunity. But how sorry he then was that he had taken it; how he hated the thimble, the more so, as in the distance he saw Mary (who had always been so kind to him,) walking sorrowfully to her home with a slow step, and he knew that it was his doing. Perhaps it may be thought that Miss Elston was rather hasty in her judgment of the poor girl; but appearances were strongly against her, she had told a story soon after she first came to Miss Elston's service, and this made

the old servants rather suspicious of her ; and when two of them entered their young lady's room that morning, and found Mary examining Miss Elston's workbox, she turned so red, and looked so confused, (knowing that she ought not to have taken this liberty,) that they began to think she was after no good, while she was really only admiring the pretty things. But when later in the day the thimble was missed, there seemed no doubt that she had taken it.

We cannot be too careful not to judge by appearances only ; for it is most difficult to distinguish the blush of innocence from the flush of shame ; it is only the Great Searcher of hearts who can invariably give righteous judgment.

Joseph felt so wretched at the mischief he had done, that he resolved to walk to Morley (where there was a fair going on,) to divert his mind. He walked about for some time, but could not treat himself to his usual quantity of sweet things ; excepting twopence his treasures were come to an end, and this he determined to spend in a glass of beer, for his walk had made him thirsty. He went, therefore, into a public-house and had his beer, and put down the cup on a table, before which a stout gentleman had been having a glass of brandy-and-water. The silver teaspoon was placed by

the side of the empty glass, and a great temptation suddenly appeared before Joseph. He gave one glance round, no one seemed to be looking his way. The stout gentleman was standing up, and had turned round with his back towards him, waiting for his change, which the landlord had gone to fetch. Quick as lightning Joseph hid the spoon in his hand, and vanished through the open door, he turned into a narrow street, and then ran as fast as he could. But he seemed to hear some one running after him, and fancied the cry of "Stop thief" would ring in his ears every minute. He rested for a second to take breath, and jumped almost off the pavement as he felt a hand upon his shoulder. A tall, stout boy, about three years older than himself, with ferrety eyes, and short red hair, addressed him in a coarse voice, saying,

"Well done, my young cove; I foresee that you will become an ornament to your profession. I haven't seen a neater trick accomplished out of London."

Joseph's jaw fell, and his face turned an ashy colour with fright. He thought all was up with him, when his new acquaintance reassured him,

"Don't look in such a funk, my fine fellow, I mean you nothing but good; and I followed you only to let you know my admiration

for your cleverness, and also to ask you if you will not join us? I am in the same trade as yourself, we are chips of the same block, I may say, but happily neither of us can be called a blockhead. My name is Sam. I believe I never had any other. My comrades are just starting for London; we have done a pretty brisk trade to-day in the watch and pocket-handkerchief line, and think that it would be better to be off at once; so you'd better join us, for really your talents are wasted in the country."

Joseph turned this new and startling idea over in his mind, he did not see what he could do better, he should then get rid of all disagreeables at home, and see a little of London life, which he thought would be very pleasant. So he agreed to accompany red-headed Sam, and quickly found himself at the railroad station, where his companion gave a twinkle with his small light eyes to a tall thin gentleman dressed in rusty black, black worsted gloves on his hands, rather the worse for wear, a threadbare hat set well at the back of his head, and his long dark hair straight and shiny, one might fancy him some conventicle preacher, from his appearance. To Joseph's surprise a word was exchanged between them, and then Sam brought him a parcel, which he asked him to tie up in his handkerchief, and take

with him into the railway carriage. Sam gave him his third-class ticket, and went to get one for himself. He soon re-appeared, and telling Joseph to take no notice of him, he seated himself in a far off corner of the carriage, and as the train panted out of the station, Joseph saw the dark thin man Sam had been speaking to, being led away by two policemen.

When the train reached London, Sam gave Joseph a wink, who taking up his bundle, followed him through narrow streets, and by short cuts, till they came to a dark entry, and at a small door Sam knocked three times, slowly and distinctly. The door was then opened by a forbidding looking old woman, no cap on her head, and her grey hair hanging about her wrinkled face, while her slatternly gown was full of holes.

"You are late," she said; "but who's this?" looking at Joseph.

"A young brick, who is one of us now," Sam replied, "I expect we shall find him a trump card."

He led the way as he spoke down some steps to an underground room, where an old man was seated smoking by the fire, and a boy about sixteen was asleep on the opposite side of the grate.

"Why, Sam, who have you brought with you?" asked the former.

"A cunning hand, I can tell you," said Sam; "I caught him in as pretty a trick as I could have managed myself, and now he has saved Piousides I expect from a good two months, for we left him in the hands of the peelers, but the proofs were all brought away safely by friend Joe here."

So saying, he opened the handkerchief, and displayed a variety of articles of different degrees of value,—purses, great and small, some containing only silver, others pretty well filled with gold, also three gold watches and two silver ones, and about a dozen silk handkerchiefs of every imaginable colour and pattern.

"Come," said the old man, whom they called Father Jack, "that's a pretty good haul for a country place; but I hope Piousides is not coming to grief."

"Oh, no," answered Sam, "you will see that he will travel by the next train, for they can find nothing to convict him upon."

And Sam's words proved true, for just as they were sitting down to a supper of boiled tripe and fried bacon, which the old woman had prepared for them, in Piousides walked, and after the serious business of supper had been going on, fast and furious for some time, he entertained the rest of the party by the account of how he took in all the magistrates by the way he cast up his eyes, and his air of in-

jured innocence, so that when his pockets were turned out, and nothing was found in them but two tracts on swearing and drunkenness, and a few halfpence, he thought they would have made a subscription for him if a London peeler had not whispered a word or two to them; as it was, one benevolent gentleman slipped a shilling into his hand as he went out, to get him a night's lodging.

Then Joseph came in for his share of praise, his friend Sam described his running off with the spoon from the public-house, until he thought himself a hero and a very fine fellow, and resolved to enter into their work in earnest.

The next morning he began his education in the light and dextrous use of his fingers, the old man walking slowly along the room, and Joseph being shown how to jerk his handkerchief out of his pocket. If he could do this without its being felt, well and good, but if he bungled in the matter, Father Jack turned round and gave him a sharp box on the ear. But I will not attempt to describe a scene which Dickens has rendered famous, suffice it to say that Joseph got plenty of cuffs, and was heartily sick of his probation before it was over; the room too was fearfully dull, for the only light admitted was through a small window close to the ceiling, which was covered

with a grating, and out of which he could just catch a glimpse of the feet of passengers as they walked past. At night this attempt at a window was carefully covered with a shutter.

Joseph's only amusement besides helping the old woman in her work, was playing cribbage with Sam, when the latter chanced to be in the house, but as he was not such a good hand at the game as his friend, he soon lost everything he possessed, even to the reversionary interest of his first gains. Sam then would play no more with him, so he was reduced to sleeping, and when that failed him, to counting how many feet walked across the grating of the window in the course of an hour, so it was a great satisfaction to Joseph when he was considered sufficiently advanced in adroitness and skill to make his first attempt in pocket-picking. Sam went with him the first time, and many an unsuspecting careless gentleman gazing admiringly into printshops and booksellers' windows, was deprived that day of his handkerchief, gloves or snuff-box by these two accomplished young vagabonds.

After this successful beginning, Joseph was taken into the confidence of the gang of thieves, and trusted with their secret counsels. He was allowed to enter a dark inner room, where a furnace was always burning, ready to be made at the shortest notice into a white

heat, which would melt silver, or anything that required the aid of fire to convert it into a different shape. This was Father Jack's especial sanctum. In a little while Joseph saw his wicked companions putting their heads together, and forming their plans about something which was evidently more serious than usual. Presently they enlightened him on the subject. They wished, they said, to relieve a rich old lady of some of her superfluous wealth. She lived in a house with only three female servants, so that there could be no danger to themselves. The only difficulty that presented itself was, that the house was fastened so carefully at night, and the barricades were so secure, that the best plan would be for one of the gang to step into the house before it was closed, and conceal himself within until all was quiet, and then to admit the others; and as Joseph was the smallest, they thought he had better be the one to effect an entrance; but that he need not be the least alarmed, for that the whole affair could be managed with the greatest ease, and great praise would accrue to him if he managed it cleverly.

Joseph agreed to try what he could do, and now behold him enlisted in a very grave concern. At eight o'clock in the evening, when it was getting dusk, Joseph and Piousides went together to the old lady's house. The

latter was dressed in his most correct suit of faded black, and desiring Joseph to conceal himself behind a wall, and that he would make him a sign when he was to come forward, he put on a sanctimonious look, and knocked gently at the back door. When the servant appeared he handed her a bundle of tracts, and asked her to show them to her mistress, as she might like to buy some. The servant did not like to shut the door in the face of such a very respectable looking person, and one who spoke so civilly too. She therefore left it ajar, and as soon as she was gone, the robber made a sign for Joseph to come forwards, for his lynx eyes saw in the passage near the entrance a dark cupboard, with the door a little open, where he thought the boy might easily secrete himself behind a cloak that was hanging up there. Just after this was accomplished the servant returned with the tracts, and told Piousides that her mistress did not want any. He said he was "much obliged to her all the same," and went away, hearing her lock the door after him. The wicked man rubbed his hands with glee. "Ah!" thought he, "you may take every precaution, my good woman, but we shall outwit you."

In the meanwhile there was Joseph in the dark cupboard; no enviable situation, let me

tell you. The door was a little open, but he did not venture to shut it, for fear it should be remarked upon; so every one who passed by seemed almost to touch him with their dress, and their voices reached him so distinctly, that in his terrified state they appeared as if close to his ear. He squeezed himself as flat as he could against the wall, that the outline of his body might not be observed; but he was afraid his feet might protrude beyond the cloak. He did not venture to move, however, and therefore became so stiff, that he felt as if he should lose the use of his limbs. At last, after what seemed to him a lifetime, he heard the servants putting up the bolts and fastenings, and making the house secure for the night; and then a horrible dread came over him, that they would examine the cupboard in which he was hidden; one poke at the cloak, and he would be discovered. His knees shook at the bare idea of such a catastrophe. He listened. They were coming near—now they were close by. One put in her head at the door; surely she must hear his heart beat. He stopped his breath.

“Is the broom in here ready for the morning, Sarah?” one servant inquired.

“All right,” said the other; and then the door was shut, and Joseph was left alone.

He gave a deep sigh; he felt he could not

have endured another moment of such agony; he must have screamed, and betrayed himself. The cold perspiration ran down his forehead, and he owned to himself that robbery was a very unpleasant business; but he knew that now he was in for it, and that there were those watching without who would pretty well do for him, if he failed them. He waited until the clock struck one—all was as quiet as the grave; so he cautiously took the match-box out of his pocket, and lighted his dark lantern, and softly lifting the latch of his prison, he stole to the back door. Placing the lantern on the ground, and throwing the light fully upon the fastenings, he with the greatest care undid them one by one, until he was able gently to turn the handle of the door. A stream of fresh air blew in his face, and a low whistle sounded close to his ear, and made him start. This was the signal agreed upon beforehand, to show him that his accomplices were all there; and they entered immediately, and closed the door after them. They took off their shoes, and not one word was allowed to be spoken except in the lowest whisper. They then proceeded deliberately to ransack the lower part of the house, for Father Jack was a very experienced hand, and went to work systematically. The larder afforded them two fine hams and a piece of beef, which were

tumbled into a sack they had brought with them. In the passage was a chest of very superior tea, which had been sent to the old lady direct from China, and had never before been opened ; but the contents were soon emptied into one of the best table-cloths, which they found in the kitchen, and this was pressed down upon the ham and beef in the sack. Their persuading instruments soon opened the dining-room sideboard without making any noise, and their hearts bounded at the sight of a fine silver tankard, a salver, and several other pieces of plate, whilst a bottle of brandy was passed silently round, each one taking a gulp until it was finished. Now they thought it was time to go up stairs, and see what the old lady there had to give them. So putting the black crape over their faces, the five hideous objects crept stealthily to the old lady's bedroom. They soon found out which that was, as she always had a light burning at night. There she lay, in happy, comfortable repose—all unconscious of the terrible forms suddenly closing round her bed. A smile passed across her face, as if in reference to a pleasant dream which was entwining itself with a slumber soft and peaceful as a child's. Surely these men will remember their own mothers, and have compassion upon the poor old lady, and not rudely wake her to such a

horrid scene. Alas ! what mercy is there in such hardened hearts ? They roughly shake her, she starts, and sitting up in bed, stares from one to the other frightful face, with dilating eyes, as if they could not take in the meaning of what they saw. They shook her again more violently, and asked her where her money was, and threatened to shoot her if she did not give it to them. They even pointed a pistol at her, but it seemed as if she had lost the power of speech, and even of comprehending their wickedness. Her poor face only grew more white and ghastly, and her eyes became more fixed.

"Come, we are wasting time with the old woman," said Father Jack, in a low voice. "She is more stupid than I thought her. Let's open the desk ; I daresay the money is there."

The thieves found thirty pounds in the desk. The plate-basket was also in the room ; so they went off very well satisfied with their plunder, and had some difficulty in dividing it all between the party, to convey it home safely. This accomplished, the silver was immediately put in the melting-pot by Father Jack, to avoid detection, and a great feast was made of the stolen meat ; but Joseph could not eat a morsel of it. The remembrance of the poor old lady's gasping mouth and stony eyes

followed him everywhere. Night and day he saw them. It was in vain his hateful companions called him "chicken-hearted," and "white-livered." He could not taste the food taken from her house, and he resolved not to share any of her money.

The whole gang kept very quiet for some days, until the robbery had blown over a little; but as soon as ever Joseph was allowed to go out, and try to manage a little light trade in the pocket-handkerchief line, he went by a sort of fascination to the house of the late robbery. All the blinds were drawn down; he shuddered. What was the cause of this gloomy look about the place? He could not help asking a woman who passed by, "whether any one was dead there?"

"Yes; haven't you heard," she said, "that a lot of thieves got in the house a few days ago, and frightened the old lady to death? When the servants came down in the morning, there was everything taken, and the poor lady (as good a lady as ever lived) had fallen back in her bed quite dead. The thieves ought to be hung," she added, "for they are as bad as murderers."

Joseph thought so too. He felt like a murderer, and knew that the remembrance of the poor death-stricken lady, as she had appeared before him that dreadful night, would haunt

him all his life long. When he mentioned what he had heard to his companions, he was shocked to see them make a joke of it.

"Poor old thing, it was quite time she was taken," they said; "she had evidently outlived her faculties;" and they bought a quantity of brandy with her money, and got terribly drunk, drinking to her happy memory. Joseph was horrified; he felt as if he was living with demons, and had cast himself by his own choice into the pit of destruction, where he seemed consigned to the custody of evil spirits, more wicked even than himself. He became moody and sullen, and he saw that he was watched suspiciously; he was never left alone, and he was not trusted with a new scheme of wickedness, which was evidently brewing amongst them; but he determined that they should kill him rather than induce him to join them in such an undertaking as the last. It is astonishing how soon ill-gotten gains make to themselves wings and fly away; and in a wonderfully short time, by rioting and drunkenness, all their pillage was disposed of. One evening the gang told him to get his hat, for that they were going for a drive into the country; he begged to be left behind, for he saw they were going to rob some house from the bundle of sacks they had collected together; the bag of tools being taken from its hiding

place, and the pistols fished out, which were carefully examined and loaded; but they would not hear of his not coming with them, in fact, when they got him inside the covered cart, they fastened his leg securely with a chain and padlock to the seat, so that he could not escape. They travelled all night long, only stopping now and then to give the horse corn, which they carried with them; the thieves took it by turns to drive, the others sleeping on some straw at the bottom of the cart. The next day they journeyed on more slowly, and stopped for two hours in a lonely place to let the good horse rest, and Joseph was allowed to stretch his legs and get out of the cart. He looked around him and rubbed his eyes; "Am I dreaming?" thought he, "surely I know this place. I seem to be close to my old home; and that is certainly Morley spire." He gazed inquiringly at Father Jack, who stood near.

"Yes," said the latter, "you remember this part of the country, I dare say; we are going to get a little money from Squire Elston, for he can well afford to give it us, but we must be careful, for he keeps two menservants, therefore we shall want you to get in at the larder window, as that seems the most unprotected part of the house."

Astonishment and horror struck Joseph dumb at first; he now burst forth in an agi-

tated voice: "Never! you shall never drag me there alive!"

"We shall see that, my young bantam cock," said Father Jack; "I think we shall hear you crow a different tune, when you have the choice of helping us, or being transported for felony."

"I don't care what happens to me," answered Joseph; "I cannot, and will not assist you in this; they have been kind to me all my life."

"What does that matter?" said Father Jack, "we sha'n't hurt the man, unless he is very troublesome; and this very night we shall help ourselves to some of his loose valuables, and we are not going to leave you behind to peach, I can promise you."

It suddenly occurred to Joseph, that if he went with them he might alarm the family and prevent them from coming to harm, so he consented to go, and when it became quite dark, he and the four other ruffians walked stealthily up the well-remembered drive to the house. Every spot seemed familiar to Joseph; under this oak tree he had paused, the very last time he passed that way, to consider whether he would not confess the theft of the gold thimble, how he wished he had listened to the pleadings of his good angel then,—now, everything that was dreadful had come upon him,

he had passed from bad to worse, until the measure of his iniquity seemed quite full. When the party came near the house they saw a stream of light issuing from an open window on the ground-floor, from which they could plainly hear voices. It was Mr. Elston and his daughter chatting together; they were sitting up later than usual that calm balmy night; being loath to leave the refreshing coolness of the fragrant evening air, as it streamed through the open window; to them, nature seemed full of peace and calmness, all unconscious as they were, that danger was lurking near them. Alas! in like manner, how often when all seems most fair, and we feel most secure of the strength of our good resolutions, is the tempter close at our elbow to endeavour to destroy us when off our guard. The robbers paused when they saw the light, and concealed themselves carefully among the trees in the plantation. Father Jack placed Joseph under a thick laurel bush, and showing him a pistol, made him understand more by signs than words, that if he attempted to move, or make any noise, before he gave him the signal to make his way to the larder window, he would instantly shoot him dead. So Joseph crouched beneath the laurel; he was actually near enough to the window to hear what Miss Elston said.

"How late it is," she exclaimed; "I cannot

think what makes me so wakeful to-night ; shall I sing you one more song, papa, before I go to bed ?” Mr. Elston was further off ; so Joseph could only suppose that he assented, as she immediately sang Handel’s beautiful air, “ Comfort ye My people,” with great sweetness and power ; and as the soft sounds came swelling out, borne by the night breeze to Joseph’s place of concealment, it seemed to him in the softened state of his heart, as if it were music from heaven, and that his SAVIOUR was interceding for his pardon. Tears, which had long been a stranger to his eyes, streamed down his face, and he prayed earnestly that his iniquity might be indeed pardoned, and that he might have strength to amend his sinful life. Presently the song was finished, and Miss Elston came to the window and leaned her head out of it. The lamp stood on a table behind her, so that she was distinctly visible, and Joseph even saw a stray curl lifted off her face for a second by a breath of wind. “ God bless her,” he thought ; “ I will save her from sorrow this night, if I die for it.” Then the window was shut and bolted, and the shutters fastened, the lights disappeared, flickering at various windows upstairs, until at last all was darkness and intense silence. Joseph fancied after this that Father Jack would never give the signal for him to move ; the fluttering of



the leaves over his head made him start, and just as he was hoping that they had given up the idea of robbing the house that night, came the sound of the three very soft distinct whistles. Joseph, however, summoned all his courage to his aid, and creeping to the larder window he found Father Jack and Sam there before him; the three together soon silently tore away the wire fencing from the window, and then the old man and Sam hoisted up Joseph, and helped him through the opening; he carefully moved away the basins and dishes from the shelf below, that he might not make a noise as he got down from the ledge of the window; having accomplished this, the lantern was handed to him, and he reached the floor safely. He now was expected to open the door to the others, but instead of this, he intended to alarm the house and put its inmates on their guard. Just as he was getting away to do this, he saw to his horror, that Sam was struggling to squeeze through the opening by which he had entered, and that as the others were pushing him with all their might he would soon manage it, though he was much stouter than Joseph. No time therefore was to be lost. He rushed off, but which way to turn he knew not, as he had never been upstairs before; he opened several doors, but the rooms were empty; at last, in very desperation, he shouted as loud as he could, "Murder! thieves,

thieves !” People seemed as if they would not awake ; perhaps he was on the wrong staircase, he ran to the other, there he met Sam, looking as frightened as himself. “Take that, you villain,” cried Sam ; and Joseph saw a flash, and heard a noise as if the earth was being rent asunder, and when he next became conscious of anything, he saw Miss Elston bending over him, her hands clasped together, looking very white, and wrapped up in a shawl. Her father was near, and the servants stood around, their dress more or less disordered. Joseph felt very faint, and his eyes seemed dim, as if everything was fading away.

“I am dying, sir,” he said to Mr. Elston, “and I should like to make a confession, if you will take it down.” Mr. Elston complied, and Joseph told everything that had passed, exactly as it happened ; he owned the taking of the thimble, and described where it was now to be found. The great robbery, and the lesser cases of dishonesty, were all disclosed ; he seemed thankful to confess all the truth at last.

“And now, oh ! Miss Elston, do you think there can be any hope for such as I am ?” he asked in a low voice, for his breath was failing him.

“I trust so, Joseph,” she said, while a tear from her eye fell upon his hand, “if you are really penitent for what you have done ; for remember the penitent robber on the cross was

forgiven by our Blessed SAVIOUR, even at the eleventh hour."

"I am indeed very sorry," he sighed; "and I am glad to think that I died in saving your property, and perhaps your lives; it seems like trying to make some small amends to show my sorrow."

Poor Joseph did not live long after this; the doctor (whom they had hurriedly sent for) said that nothing could be done for him, as the shot had entered a vital part, so that he breathed his last quietly, lying on the mat at the foot of the stairs, as they did not like to disturb him by carrying him to a room. The house had been alarmed by the noise of the firing, and of Joseph's cries, but the thieves had escaped, being frightened at what Sam had done. I may mention in conclusion that their London haunt was searched, but no one was found there, as they were working their passage to Australia, where they hoped to make fortunes by gold digging; instead of which, they perished horribly by bowie knives for trying to take possession of the gold belonging to other people, instead of labouring hard for themselves. Little Mary was established again in Miss Elston's service, and is now a good trustworthy girl; and gossips say that poor Joseph did more good at his death than he did in his life. Let us take care that this may not be said of us.



THE GHOST.

Tenth Commandment.

"If any touch my friend or his good name,
It is my honour and my love to free
His blasted fame
From the least spot or thought of blame."

"The sweet cement, which in one sure band
Ties the whole frame, is love
And charity."

MISS Snarldon was peering over the blinds in her front parlour, it was getting dusk, so that she had to strain her long neck, and look very fixedly before her investigations were satisfied. At last she started back, and the bows of her cap shook with indignation as she exclaimed to herself, "It is as I thought! Mrs. Hunt has a large piece of meat in her basket, and it was only this morning that she came and begged me to give her sixpence to buy some bread for her family, for they were almost starving, and now when she thinks I shall not see her,

she sneaks by with that great joint, the deceitful, storytelling woman."

"Oh, Susan," cried she, as her servant entered the room with the candles, "when next Mrs. Hunt comes here, send her away directly, for I find she has been deceiving me dreadfully. She told me this morning that she had no money, and I have just seen her go by with a basketful of meat and other good things."

"Indeed, ma'am, that is very likely," said Susan, "she's a good-for-nothing woman, and for the matter of that, so they all are."

The mistress and maid were a very well matched pair, they were not tormented with too much of the milk of human kindness, it was very seldom that any one could obtain their good word, and if a remarkably sharp person was clever enough to cheat them once, they could never boast of doing so another time.

Miss Snarldon was a lady of what is called a *certain age*, that is to say, she would never see the ripe age of fifty again; she was possessed of an independent property which enabled her to live in comfort without any exertions of her own, and not being blessed with the heavenly gift of seeing good in every one, however unworthy they might appear to be, nor having the wish of seeking out cases of

distress and sorrow in order to relieve them, she employed the many hours which would otherwise have hung heavy on her hands, in finding out her neighbours' business, imputing bad motives to their conduct, and painting poor human nature in her blackest colours.

As a matter of course she was often mistaken in her judgments; even Mrs. Hunt, (who was thought to be so wicked because she had a piece of meat in her basket,) had just been given this nice dinner most unexpectedly for a treat next day, by a kind lady who had called at her house and seen her destitution, and thought that she should like to feel that this large family had a comfortable Sunday meal for once.

Susan having shut the shutters, and given the fire a friendly poke, which set the flames blazing up the chimney cheerily, proceeded to place the tea-things on the table; Miss Snarldon brought a handsome cake out of a cupboard, and while Susan went for the hot muffins and crumpets, a knock was heard at the door,—evidently company were coming to tea. First there entered a pleasant elderly lady, and a young one aged about twenty-one, pretty and bright looking; these good people were Mrs. Grove and her daughter Annie. Mr. Grove had been the Rector of the little town of Lister for many years, and after his death the sorrow-

ing widow settled herself in a small house in the same place with her only child, for she did not wish to leave her old friends, and as her circumstances were narrow, she thought that people would be more inclined to make excuses for her where she was well known, than if she planted herself again in a very humble way among strangers. They were beloved by every one, and being very quiet and unpretending, even Miss Snarldon could not often find anything to say against them. The only other additions to the tea-party were Miss Parkins and her little niece, Kate, a child about ten years old; she was especially invited on the present occasion to wind some worsted for Miss Snarldon, who was knitting herself a great covering for the sofa. By the way, Miss Snarldon was very obliging to Miss Parkins, and often asked her to drop in and dine, or spend the evening with her, which was convenient to the latter, who was not young, or very well off, and who found a difficulty sometimes in jogging along the uphill and bare road of life, to people with small means. The only return Miss Snarldon expected was, that all the gossip of the little country town should be collected and retailed to her, and it was understood between them (though it had never been expressed in so many words) that if Miss Snarldon had a spite against any one, Miss

Parkins could not show her gratitude in a more acceptable manner, and give her friend greater pleasure, than by bringing all the ill-natured stories she could scrape together against that unfortunate person, with as many exaggerations as Miss Parkins liked to add to them.

But we are leaving the party a long time at their tea, indeed it was rather a lengthy affair, so many good things had to be discussed, and Miss Parkins allowed a lion's share of muffins and buttered toast to slip down her throat (for, poor thing, she had eaten no dinner that day,) before she dipped into her bag of news. Having finished her share of the "talking water," she removed the handkerchief which was spread over her faded brown silk gown, and asked the company generally whether they had heard the shocking report that Mr. Nairne, the banker, would shortly become bankrupt. When every one had lifted up their hands and eyes sufficiently, (for all the party were interested in the welfare of the old bank,) she added, "Of course, I cannot tell the truth of it, but people are very much frightened, and they do say that there was a run upon the bank last Thursday, and that the sovereigns they issued were all hot, as if they had just been coined."

"That is impossible," cried Annie Grove,

"because the only place where money is allowed to be coined is at the Mint in London."

"Well, my dear, I do not know how that is," said Miss Parkins, "perhaps they had the sovereigns sent down quickly by express; all I can say is, that when I took out my small matter of money, which I did at once, I observed all the clerks looked very pale and serious. Mr. Nairne too was not in the bank, which was a very bad sign." After the startling intelligence had sunk into their hearts, and both Miss Snarldon and Mrs. Grove had determined that they would recall what balance they had into their own hands, the first thing on Monday morning, she gathered up the reins of her mind for another stroke. "The house on the common was being pulled down," she told them, "and a better one placed in its stead by the lord of the manor, and under the old floor he has found some bones, which are supposed to be the skeleton of a girl; and it is thought that she was murdered by the son of the old man who lived there, and who afterwards ran away, and had never been heard of since."

"But that is so many years ago," said Mrs. Grove; "he must have been quite a boy, not more than twelve years old I should think."

"I am afraid that youth is no safeguard against wickedness," chimed in Miss Snarl-

don ; " murder very soon came into the world, and Cain must have been quite a youth when he killed his brother. And talking of that, have you heard anything lately, Miss Parkins, of that young reprobate, Mr. Warrington ?"

" Oh !" exclaimed Miss Parkins, dropping her bag out of her hand, in her horror of what she was going to say. " Sarah White's baby was ill, so she sent for Mr. Warrington, and the young man came so intoxicated that he could hardly stand, and he gave the baby something, which very soon killed it ! What do you think of that ?"

" It cannot be true," said Annie, in an agitated manner, her face in one glow ; " we have known him all his life, and indeed he never drinks more than he ought. The baby must have been very ill, most likely dying, when Mr. Warrington was called in, so that he could do nothing for the poor little thing."

" I am sorry you are interested in the young man, my dear Miss Grove," answered Miss Parkins, bridling up at her story being called in question ; " but I assure you the poor woman related the history to me with tears in her eyes. And I have worse still to tell you, for I think you ought to know the worst of this abandoned wretch. You must know that I was returning rather late last night from Miss

Cole's (for she and I, and the two Miss Cartwrights, had been having a rubber, and it took us a long time to decide the conqueror, for we all held such very even cards,) as I was saying, it was late, past eleven o'clock, I believe, when I saw a tall man coming towards me, very much muffled up about the face ; but it struck me he resembled Mr. Warrington. He stopped before the door of that notorious gambling-house in North-street ; he looked right and left, but he did not see me, for I kept still, and stood close to the railings. The lamp shone full upon his face for a moment, and then I saw that my suspicions were just, it *was* Mr. Warrington," added Miss Parkins, lowering her voice, so as to send a thrill through her hearers, "He went into the gambling-house, and the door was closed behind him."

There was a pause after this relation for a few minutes, no one seemed to like to break the silence. At last Miss Snarldon observed,

"We can very easily see what the end of this young man will be, and can tell where his money goes, for he is always as poor as Job ; and yet they say that his uncle allows him a very fair share of the profits of his profession, now that he has taken him into partnership. It must be a terrible grief to him to see the nephew he has brought up, and been so kind

to, turn out so badly, and set such a bad example to his son."

"Let us hope that the poor young man may see the error of his ways before it is too late," said Mrs. Grove, "and let us speak only of his many good qualities, and remember that 'charity thinketh no evil.'"

"Begging your pardon," returned Miss Snarldon, directly, "I call that a very wrong way of putting the matter: if we know a person to be wicked, I consider it right to mention it to others, that they may be on their guard against him. Perhaps if everybody did this it might prevent many crimes. Charity, in my opinion, means giving away money to judicious objects. I hope we all do this; and I am sure that there is not a subscription in the town to which I do not add my mite."

"I quite think with you," agreed the amiable Miss Parkins, "charity of course is the bestowing alms as much as is in our power, and happy are they who have a long purse at their command, if they have the grace to use it aright, if not their state is sad indeed. My little niece can repeat a hymn on this subject, if you would like to hear it?"

Leave was given immediately, for everybody was beginning to feel uncomfortable at the personal turn the conversation had taken, and Mrs. Grove and her daughter were thankful of

anything to stop the mouths of the two ladies from dragging down their friends' reputations any lower ; so the little girl repeated the following simple verses :

“ The sounds of revelry are heard
From out the stately hall ;
The richest fare is never spared,
By the gay lord of all.

“ There came a poor man to the door,
And sadly there he stood ;
For pity kind, he did implore,
And prayed for rest and food.

“ ‘ Help me for CHRIST’s dear sake,’ cried he ;
‘ I’m weary, faint, and low ;
And of thy plenty give to me,
A morsel, ere I go.’

“ ‘ Away, bold man,’ with anger called
The gay lord from his board ;
His guests disturbed, with clamour bawled,
And then the wine they poured.

“ The song went round, the laughter rang,
As slowly passed away
That stranger pale, that footsore man,
They scorned and mocked that day.

“ He journeyed by a lowly cot,
Where ‘neath the woodbine’s shade,
With bowl of bread and milk made hot,
There sat a little maid.

“ Her eyes are raised to thank her God,
For food to her so sweet ;
When near the weary stranger trod,
And him her blue eyes meet.

"She saw his sad and hungry look,
His slow and tired pace;
And her untasted meal she took,
While heaven shone in her face.

" ' Poor man, I pray, my supper take,
And rest thee here awhile;
We must do good for CHRIST's dear sake,
If we would win His smile.'

"He took her cup, and placed his hand
Upon her golden hair;
And bless'd the maid, as she did stand,
So smiling and so fair.

"Her azure eyes enraptured grew,
And filled with love and awe;
Where stood the stranger, changed to view,
Her Heavenly LORD she saw!

"The little maid, an angel bright,
Now singeth near God's throne;
The worldly lord, far from His sight,
Makes everlasting moan."

"Thank you, Katie; that is what I think charity means—namely, giving our alms properly," was Miss Snarldon's comment on Katie's little poem.

Happily just then Susan entered with the sweetbreads and lamb's fry, and the odour of these fragrant viands was so agreeable to the olfactory nerves of the ladies, and the partaking of the dainties had such a soothing effect upon their palates, that nothing more disagreeable was said, and as soon as it was

proper after supper, Mrs. Grove and her daughter took leave of their hostess and departed.

Directly they were outside the door, Annie said to her mother, "Don't let us ever go there again, dear mamma. How ill-natured and censorious Miss Snarldon and her friend are. These dreadful things cannot be true, can they?" she asked, looking up with an anxious glance in Mrs. Grove's face.

"My darling," she answered, "I trust the account of Mrs. White's baby is an exaggeration; but I fear that it is true that Miss Parkins saw Mr. Warrington enter the gambling-house, for she could not have invented such a story; and gambling is such a dreadful sin, my dear, that I would almost as soon see my child in her grave, as married to a man addicted to it. I once had a sister I loved very fondly, who united herself to a gentleman whom everybody admired. He seemed very amiable and agreeable, and we were in hopes that a happy future was in store for her. But too late it was discovered that he was a gamester. He spent all his own property, and mortgaged all his wife's money that he could not spend, and at last shot himself, leaving my dear sister penniless and broken-hearted. She died soon after. Poor thing! I shall never forget her misery; and

I tell you this sad tale, my darling, for the first time, to induce you to promise me faithfully that you will never marry Mr. Warrington if there is any fear of this sin clinging to him."

"I promise you, dear mamma, that I will not do so," said Annie in a sad voice, "though you know he has never asked me to be his wife as yet; but I can tell he loves me, and oh, mother, I love him so dearly."

"My dear Annie, let us comfort one another. I own I thought he would have made you such a good husband, and have taken care of you when I leave you alone in this cold world, and now I tremble at the escape you have had."

So saying, the mother and daughter entered their humble dwelling, hand in hand, where we will leave them to seek such repose as they could obtain, after the sad disclosures which had entered their unwilling ears.

We will now inquire a little about the unfortunate Mr. Warrington, who remains quite unconscious that his character had fallen below zero that evening, and that misfortunes were crowding around him. His father and mother had died early in life, leaving their penniless boy to the care of his uncle, Mr. Turner, who was a surgeon in good practice, and who had nobly fulfilled the trust reposed

in him. He had watched over the youth, sent him to school, and brought him up to his own profession, and he had just taken him into partnership, as he had passed all his examinations creditably, and hoped that every thing was going on in a promising manner. Mr. Turner had one son, a few years younger than his cousin. Good-tempered and full of fun, Gilbert Turner was a favourite with everybody; indeed, he was generally liked much better than the graver and more reserved Robert Warrington; and all his wild pranks were put down to his youth and high spirits, and if he was found out, which was not often the case (as he was generally pretty clever in escaping detection), he always owned himself so handsomely in the wrong, and made so many jokes against himself, that people said there was no harm in him, and forgave him easily. But Robert knew that he had unhappily acquired one bad habit among his gay friends, which, if it came to his father's ears, would cause him the utmost misery; and this was—sad to relate—*gambling*. For a long time Robert himself was not aware of it. His cousin often borrowed money of him, which he lent him willingly; but at last the sums asked for were so large, that it was extremely inconvenient to him to advance them. But he was very fond of Gilbert, who always brought forward such

specious reasons for wanting the money just then, that he did not like to refuse him, and he remembered that he owed all he possessed to the goodness of his kind uncle. Mr. Turner was very particular about money matters. Just and straightforward in all his own dealings, he expected others to be so too. As for cards and dice, he had a perfect horror of them, and once declared that if any one belonging to him ever got a liking for card-playing, he should never know another happy moment. At last Robert conceived a suspicion of the real state of the case. One night, as he was lying awake after all had gone up to bed some time, he heard a step creeping softly down stairs, and then the front door opened very gently and was closed again. He jumped up and ran to his cousin's room, which was next to his. The bed was unoccupied! It flashed through his mind that he was gone to play those odious cards, which had been the ruin of so many; and he determined to save him if he could. So he dressed himself as quickly as possible, and let himself out of the house, as Gilbert had done before, and went to the gambling-house, where the lowest characters resorted, though outside nothing out of the common appeared. A modest lamp only showed the word "Billiards" in small letters over the door. Robert (as Miss Parkins had

described) paused a minute before entering, and looked around on all sides. He should be ruined, he knew, if he were seen. No one appeared to be within view, so he entered. Inside was a red baize door. When that was passed, the scene was entirely changed. Gas flared and flamed from a large glass chandelier, which was suspended from the ceiling of a spacious hall, and lighted up the gilding and the gaudy colouring on all sides, as well as the dancing figures which were painted in various panels on the walls. It was a gilded sepulchre, he thought; but he did not pause, but followed a waiter up a wide staircase, where the noise of loud voices and the rattling of dice, of billiard balls, and of money, met his ear. The door was opened, and he stood within what might well be called "a hell." As long as he lived, that scene would remain in his memory. There, seated at various tables, were haggard, wild looking men, their eyes bloodshot with eagerness, and bearing such an expression of malignant cunning in their evil faces, as if they would well nigh tear the souls out of their fellow creatures' bodies, for the sake of gold.

Robert looked along the room, yes, at the farther corner sat the very person of whom he was in search, he appeared to have just been playing, and to have pushed his chair hastily

away from the table, his arms were leaning upon the back of another chair, and his face was buried in them, giving the idea of the deepest despondency; he had evidently met with bad luck. Robert went up to him, and laid his hand upon his shoulder; Gilbert started and looked up with such a despairing, hopeless face, that it went to his cousin's heart at once.

"Robert," he cried, "is it possible that I see you? what brings you here?"

"Come with me, and I will tell you," said Robert.

His cousin readily consented, for he seemed sick of the place.

"Are not you going to stay and have your revenge?" called out a flashy young man with a showy waistcoat, and a plentiful supply of watch-chain, who was playing cards at one of the tables. Gilbert shook his head. "Well, remember, to-morrow then," continued the young man, holding up a piece of paper, and laughing at him.

Gilbert reddened, and grasped his cousin's arm the tighter, and as soon as they had left the heated stifling air, redolent with the fumes of spirits and tobacco, and were come into the cool calm atmosphere of night, he exclaimed,

"Oh, Robert, I am utterly ruined and lost! I am thankful that you have found me out at last, for I hate that wretched place, and my-

self, and all, and am glad to confess everything to you. At first I used to win, and I liked the excitement, and the fun of doing the thing on the sly, but soon the play became serious and earnest, I lost all the money I had, and I borrowed of you, thinking (like an idiot) that I should redeem what was already gone, and so it went on, and to-night I seemed to be infatuated, and to fancy that I should win back sufficient to pay all I owed you, and *fifty* pounds I owed the man who held that paper up to me, and now that awful piece of paper is inscribed with my I. O. U. for fifty pounds, and I have not one sixpence to pay either you or him. I am lost, as I said before, I shall be the death of my dear father, and I shall die eternally myself."

"Gilbert," said Robert, "I can see a way out of this difficulty, and I will help you in the matter upon one condition, and upon one condition only."

"Name it," replied Gilbert, "I promise beforehand to agree to it."

"I do not wish you to do that," said Robert, "for it is a serious matter to decide upon, I do not wish you to give your word hastily. If I engage that this odious man should be paid, and you freed from his power, will you assure me faithfully that you will never touch cards or dice again?"

"I do indeed most solemnly," said Gilbert ; "only get me out of that man's clutches, and I will thank you for ever as my deliverer."

"Well, then," answered Robert, "I promise you to tell no one of this sad affair, and to-morrow I will borrow fifty pounds of the bank to pay this man ; you cannot do it, for you are not of age, and besides it would be sure to come to your father's ears. Now we will go home, and turn over a new leaf for the future."

The two cousins walked slowly home together, where Gilbert's latch-key soon admitted them, and with one warm shake of the hand, which each felt bound them to one another for life, they parted, to court a short repose, before the early breakfast, where all were expected to appear, unless some very extraordinary event happened to prevent it.

Robert went to the bank as soon as he could, and told the head clerk he wished to borrow fifty pounds for a short time, and that he would give them five per cent. interest if they would lend it him. The clerk looked at him sorrowfully, he had known him from a boy, and he thought it a bad sign that he should begin borrowing so soon, when he had so few expenses, as he lived with his uncle, who provided him with everything he could want. Seeing the old man's hesitation, Robert added, "I think my uncle would ap-

prove of the object for which I want this money."

"Then why don't you ask him to lend it you?" said the clerk.

"That is quite impossible," said Robert, getting very red under the old man's fixed look, who however expostulated with him no further, but handed him the money; and as he locked up Robert's acknowledgment in his desk, he thought to himself, "I am afraid that excellent Mr. Turner is deceived in this young man. I don't like the look of this business."

There was another person in the bank who was interested in Robert's business, and that was Miss Snarldon; she came to change a five-pound note, and directly she saw the unfortunate Robert, the love of investigation rose strong within her, and she crept up as near as she could, in hopes of catching a word or two of what was passing between him and the clerk. The desk at which the latter was sitting was too far off, and their voices were too low to enable her to do this, but she could study their faces, and form very shrewd suspicions as to the purport of their conversation. She saw Robert pocket some money, and directly he went away she followed him, but had some difficulty in keeping him in sight, as he walked very fast. He had also engaged to pay the fifty pounds to the sharper himself,

that his cousin might not meet him again, and incur the danger of being inveigled into more gambling.

Miss Snarldon had to pursue her prey through some rather questionable looking streets, narrow and dirty; at last he stopped before a shabby house, and knocked at the door; an untidy woman answered the summons, and he was admitted. So Miss Snarldon took down the number of the house, and went away; she had gained all the information she wanted at one time, and she carried this at once to her "jackal," Miss Parkins, and set her on the scent.

Miss Parkins, in her sagacious manner, obtained most valuable additional intelligence; she walked straight to the house Miss Snarldon had indicated to her, and asked if they had any lodgings to let.

The woman replied, that if she had come earlier in the day, she should have answered her in the affirmative, as she had a gentleman lodging there who had not paid them for more than a month, and she had therefore given him notice to quit, but a friend of his had called not long ago, and given him a lot of money, so that he had paid her, and shown her a purse full of banknotes besides, therefore he was safe for the present. "You know we must look sharp after these card-playing

gentlemen," she added, "for if we don't get their money when we can, they are off suddenly, and then we may whistle for a sight of their silver."

The indefatigable Miss Parkins hastened back to her friend with this delightful news; she was asked to remain and dine with Miss Snarldon upon the strength of it, and it was melancholy to see the well-matched pair putting their heads together, and rejoicing over what seemed to be the black side of a fellow-creature. Susan, as she waited at table, joined in their abuse of poor Robert, so that between them all his doom was pretty well settled, and it was agreed between them that the more public they made their discoveries, the better it would be for society at large.

The two friends separated, very well pleased with one another, and eager to trace out fresh mischief.

Meanwhile Robert was very well pleased with his morning's work; he took the sharper's release to his cousin, who was overjoyed to be free of his disagreeable creditor, and promised his cousin most honestly that he would keep clear of this temptation in future. Robert was very glad that the time had arrived for Gilbert to go to college, as it would remove him from his bad companions, and allow him time to strengthen himself in his good resolutions.

One night, however, about two days before Gilbert left home, as he was passing through the churchyard on his way to his father's house, a large white owl suddenly rose from behind a tombstone, and flapping its great heavy wings, mounted slowly in the air. Two boys, who were close by, were so frightened that they rushed to their homes calling out, "A ghost, a ghost!" Gilbert was so much amused at their folly that he began to think whether he could not improve the occasion by giving them a real one; for his naturally high spirits had recovered their wonted buoyancy since his kind cousin had so unselfishly extricated him from the serious scrape he had fallen into. So the following night, being a bright moonlight evening, he dressed himself up in a white smock-frock he had bought for the occasion, and with a white wig on his head, and a large pair of spectacles on his nose he determined to personate the ghost of the late sexton, John Hodge, who had died not long before. He did not let his cousin into his secret, as he knew how strongly he set his face against all practical jokes. About ten o'clock, therefore, he slipped out of the back door, clad in this curious garb, his face whitened, and with a spade in his hand he stood under the dark shadow of the church to see who would pass by.

Presently came a young girl about fifteen, who was evidently rather nervous at having to go through the churchyard at all. Here was a fine opportunity for Gilbert, who had only to show himself and lean on his spade, when away rushed the little maiden as fast as her legs could carry her, screaming at the top of her voice.

The sound had hardly ceased, and Gilbert had scarcely stopped chuckling, when from the opposite direction came a tall lady and her servant following her. It was Miss Snarldon and her maid Susan returning from a tea-party. This was a glorious chance in Gilbert's opinion for him to distinguish himself, so he crouched down behind John Hodge's tombstone, and just as the lady came near, he rose slowly up, the moon shining full upon his white wig and face, and his great round spectacles.

Miss Snarldon uttered scream upon scream, and her maid did the same, and when Gilbert, keeping on the grass, began slowly moving towards them, Miss Snarldon fell down in a fainting fit.

Here was a predicament ; Gilbert felt that he had gone too far. "Who would have believed that she could be such an old fool?" he thought ; however he glided back to the shadow of the church, and throwing off his disguise,

made his way round in the opposite direction towards Miss Snarldon, who was just recovering.

"Dear me," he exclaimed, "what is the matter? I hope you are not ill."

"Oh," gasped that lady, "I have been dreadfully frightened by a ghost, who ran after me, and would have perhaps torn me to pieces if you had not come by, kind Mr. Gilbert; my maid Susan I verily believe he has carried off."

"Perhaps she is gone home to call for help," said Gilbert, who had seen Susan scamper away as fast as she could, leaving her mistress to her fate, "but at all events let me see you safely from these dangers, whatever they are."

Miss Snarldon took his arm, and amused him with her account of the dreadful apparition which had risen from behind the last made grave, that it was very tall and white, had great transparent eyes, which stared horribly, and in its hand it carried a weapon of some sort, with which it certainly would have murdered her, she said, if Gilbert had not so opportunely come to her rescue.

"How very shocking," said Gilbert, "but I did not know that ghosts were capable of giving blows."

"Well, this one," replied Miss Snarldon, "appeared a particularly strong one."

Just then they came in sight of Susan, who

was loudly telling her tale to some of her neighbours whom she had collected together. Directly she saw her mistress she began to "bless her stars" that she saw her alive, and showed her how much she had studied her interest in running off for assistance. "You know, ma'am," said she, "what could I have done against such a big ghost? I ain't used to them things, and most likely I should have made it only more angry."

While this was going on, Gilbert contrived to make his escape, for he was afraid lest some busy person in trying to lay this ghost might find his disguise which he had hidden near the Church.

The next day the "ghost" was in everybody's mouth, no one could talk of anything else. Robert heard something about it, but thought it only an idle tale, and when Miss Snarldon sent for him to come and see her, as she was very ill in consequence of her terror at the ghost, he thought her a silly old goose. He saw at once there was not much the matter with her health, and upon her beginning the history of her encounter with the ghost, he begged her to excuse him; "He had already heard the tale seven times over, and as he was very busy, he must wish her good morning, but he would send her some medicine, and if she kept quiet she would soon be quite well."

Miss Snarldon was deeply offended. "The good-for-nothing, insolent, young man," she said, "he little knows that I could ruin him, and I will too," she added, with a gleam of triumph in her eyes, "his uncle shall hear of his wicked ways before I am much older."

"Yes, that is but right," said Susan, "and if it was ever found out that the horrid ghost was some one dressed up to terrify folks, I should think he must be that bad person, or he would not so much dislike hearing about it."

"If I thought that, Susan, I should think no word and no end bad enough for him: we will watch, and I will get some gentlemen who are afraid of nothing to watch to-night, with good bludgeons in their hands, perhaps they may be able to settle this ghost, for your idea may be a very good one."

This was the day for Gilbert to go to Oxford. He wished all "Good-bye" at home, and drove to the railway station, which was some little way off; here he dismissed the carriage, and as soon as it was safely out of sight, he carried his portmanteau to a little inn near, and ordered a bed, saying that he was going by the early train in the morning. He then had some dinner, and when he thought it was time started to walk back to Lister, for he could not resist the temptation of enjoying one piece of mischief more in the character of

a ghost. He could not expect such fun as he had had the last night he thought, for the old maids would now be afraid of the churchyard, yet some people would be sure to wish to see if there were any truth in the report, and therefore some amusement might be hoped for.

The night was rather cloudy and the moon shone in fitful gleams, sometimes every object was as clear as day, and in a moment all wore the sombre hue of blackness. Gilbert, under cover of the dark shadow, slipped into his father's garden, and thence into an outhouse, where he had placed his concealing habiliments, and having donned them, with spade in hand, he crept forth in search of adventures.

He reached the churchyard, and placed himself behind poor John Hodge's tomb, whilst the moon was shaded by a cloud, and when its rays shone forth again, he raised himself to look about him, when what was his surprise to see three men standing some little way off; they appeared not at all frightened by the sight of the ghost, but darting forward, sprang towards him.

Gilbert felt there was nothing left for him but ignominious flight, for he knew they were not people to be scared, so he showed a swift pair of heels, and away they all went as fast as their legs could carry them, Gilbert about

twenty yards in advance, and the men in hot pursuit.

Gilbert longed to throw away the spade, which was much in his way, but he knew that if he did so it would certainly lead to his detection, so he placed it over his shoulder, clambered over the wall, then along the lane, until he was close to his father's garden; but though so near his place of refuge Gilbert felt that his case was hopeless, they were gaining upon him, his folly would be discovered, and what would his father and Robert say to him? he could even hear the breathing of his pursuers; all seemed lost, when suddenly a friendly cloud veiled the bright moon, and in a second all was darkness: to jump over the railings of his father's garden was the work of a moment, he crept softly on hands and knees to the toolhouse, and had just closed the door gently behind him when he heard the men run quickly past; one of them called out, "I know he came somewhere this way, he must have gone to the house, if we make haste we shall have time to catch him before he can get in."

Gilbert saw that now was an opportunity for him to make his escape, so tearing off his white wig, spectacles, and smock frock, he thrust them at the bottom of an old hamper half filled with straw and matting; then softly stealing forth from his hiding place, he vaulted

back again over the railings, and was soon running at a swift pace back to the railroad station, where he took a short but much required repose, and the early train found him on his way to Oxford, congratulating himself upon having got so easily out of his difficulties.

The three men finding the doors and windows of the house all securely fastened, fancied that their prey must have been too quick for them, and have entered by some means of ingress which he had taken care to have ready for him ; they did not like to rouse the house and disturb Mr. Turner, but went away very much annoyed at having been outwitted.

The next morning the three wisecrates called upon Miss Snarldon, and told her the result of their night's watching.

Her indignation was terrible to behold. "It is, then, Mr. Warrington who has been trying to frighten people to death, and to murder the helpless and innocent," said she, "and I will tell you what it is," she added in an awful whisper, "he does not do it for fun, his gloomy air forbids that thought, but he does it for business, for the hideous business of digging up dead bodies ; poor John Hodge died rather suddenly, and no one knew the immediate cause of his death, and this wretched young man has turned 'ghool' and resurrectionist for

the pleasure of dissecting the poor old man's body."

This dreadful supposition was received with a groan by all the hearers, they felt it was a frightful idea, and yet what was more likely? They all looked at one another, no one seemed safe, and no dead and buried friend even was secure of a safe and quiet resting-place.

Miss Snarldon put on her bonnet with resolution. "Come, Miss Parkins," she said, "we will go to Mr. Turner at once, and tell him everything; it is right that his eyes should be opened, and that he should no longer be deceived in this wicked nephew of his."

So she and her friend went to Mr. Turner, and told him of all the iniquities of which she believed poor Mr. Warrington to have been guilty.

He could hardly credit his ears; still the stories were told so circumstantially that he did not know what to think. Robert was out, so he could not question him then; he, however, cross-examined the watchmen, who had traced a tall figure into his very garden the night before, and they all agreed in thinking it his nephew; he knew it could not be his servant, as he was a short thick man, and his son whom he would have suspected had it been possible, he fancied was at that time safely in Oxford. So he was in great distress

of mind, but what gave him most concern was the thought of his gambling, that seemed to him terrible, and with a heavy heart he walked to the bank, and asked if it were true that his nephew had borrowed some money to pay a debt of honour?

The head clerk said that he certainly had borrowed fifty pounds, but he did not know what it was for, though he feared it was for no good purpose, as Mr. Warrington had looked so confused when he expostulated with him on the subject. Mr. Turner walked home very miserable, and meeting Robert, he asked him point-blank whether he had borrowed fifty pounds to pay a gambling debt. Poor Robert was quite unprepared for such a question; he stammered, and at last owned that such was the case. His uncle sighed deeply,—“That my dear sister’s son should ever come to this,” he said, “Oh, Robert, how you have deceived me, and all the time I considered you such a safeguard to Gilbert, and thought him so lucky to have such a friend.”

Robert was cut to the heart at this, but did not see any way of clearing himself, unless by implicating his cousin, and that he felt would be impossible. The ghost story he treated as a joke, but though he made light of it, other people did not, and a regular clamour arose against him. Directly he appeared out of

doors, boys were in waiting, who called out after him, "Who's a resurrectionist?" "Who dug up John Hodge?" "Where do you keep your dead bodies?" and such like; and when it became dusk, and they could escape detection, they even went so far as to pelt him with mud and small stones. Poor Robert was very miserable; he felt that his uncle was changed towards him, and had no longer the same confidence in him. Mrs. Grove looked coldly upon him; Annie was obliged to keep her bed, for these sad events had given her such a shock that she was quite ill; so Robert could not see how she mourned and grieved over his misfortunes. The old and respectable inhabitants of the place thought the matter a very grave one, and advised the clergyman to give way to the popular outcry so far as to have the coffin of the poor old sexton exhumed, that all might see that no tricks had been played with it. This was accordingly done: but it was a horrid sight; the body was there certainly, but either in lowering the coffin into the grave, or in taking it up again, the corpse had been shaken so that it was bent on one side, and a shocking object. The respectable part of those who had witnessed this terrible exhibition were convinced that poor old John had not been tampered with; but the ignorant people fancied from the position in which the body was found,

that it had the appearance of having been taken out, and put hastily back again, and therefore the popular fury against Robert was greater than ever; no one would let him enter his or her door, and stifled hisses and groans followed him wherever he went. One day his uncle took him aside and showed him a letter he had received from the captain of a merchant vessel, asking him if he could recommend him a surgeon to take on board his ship; he was going to China, and expected to be absent about a year. Mr. Turner asked his nephew whether he would be inclined to accept this post; it might be a good plan to give people's minds time to cool, for that probably by the end of the year these reports might be blown over.

Robert gladly agreed to his uncle's proposal; he felt that Lister was no place for him just now, and he should be glad to leave it, for even Annie seemed against him. He had a very short time to make his preparations, but he called upon Mrs. Grove before he went, and she was very thankful that her daughter was not downstairs, for when she looked upon his sad face, and thought how fond she used to be of him, she could hardly help forgiving him everything, and bidding him be happy. She knew that at that melancholy parting poor Annie's loving heart would have melted entirely in his favour; she, however, steeled her-

self by the remembrance of her sister's fate, who had married a gamester, and bade Robert farewell with good wishes only. Meanwhile Gilbert went on very well at college; he kept his promise faithfully that he made to his cousin of never touching a card, and passed his first examination creditably. His letters from home being only from gentlemen, contained no gossiping news; he heard generally that Robert was appointed as surgeon to a ship bound for China, which rather surprised him, but he thought him a very lucky dog, to see so much of the world: therefore, when he returned to Lister at the vacation, and found how low poor Robert had sunk in the estimation of every one, and saw that it was entirely owing to his own sins and frolics, he was dreadfully shocked, and at once confessed everything to his father. He showed him how his cousin's kindness and generosity had rescued him from a life of ruin, and took his foolish disguise from its hiding place, and carried it to Miss Snarldon, and Robert's other traducers, that he might convince them of his cousin's entire innocence, and that he alone was the guilty party.

To do Miss Snarldon and Miss Parkins justice, they were very sorry when they found they had slandered the character of a really excellent young man; they had been the means of banishing him from his native land, and de-

priving him of his friends and his good name, while all the time it appeared that he had been sacrificing himself for the good of his cousin. It was a lesson to them all the rest of their lives, not to give hasty unkind judgments, lest they should fall into the sin of bearing false witness against their neighbour. Annie's joy can be imagined at finding her lover restored to her mother's good opinion, and to that place in her own heart, from which indeed he could hardly be said to have been expelled. Her health was soon re-established, and the only thing left to be desired, was that the year of banishment should fly away as quickly as possible.

It was curious to observe the instability of the estimation of the world; as soon as Gilbert had given the turn to the tide of popular opinion it rushed like a violent flood in the opposite direction, and as, before, no execration could be too outrageous for poor Robert, so now, no words could be sufficiently strong to express their admiration for him. And when at the end of the year he returned rather browner, but all the better for his travels, the people assembled in crowds to welcome him home again, and there was a sort of ovation in his honour. But what he valued the most, was the warm pressure of his uncle's hand, and his glistening eyes fixed upon him with love and

gratitude; and as he turned to his cousin's penitent humble face, he said, "Such a return as this is worth ten years of banishment." A happier trio seldom passed an evening together, and in a short time a joyful wedding took place, when everybody vied with each other as to who should show most honour to the young couple. It is even rumoured that Miss Snarldon's stupendous piece of knitting is to be presented to Mr. and Mrs. Warrington for their new house; but this requires confirmation.

"By our own niggard rule we try
The hope to suppliants given:
We mete out love, as if our eye
Saw to the end of heaven."



THE WARM RECEPTION.

Tenth Commandment.

"See here the fruit of wandering eyes,
Of worldly longings to be wise,
Of passion dwelling on forbidden sweets.
Ye lawless glances freely rove ;
Ruin below, and wrath above,
Are all that now the wildering fancy meets."

M^r. Nugent was justly considered the great man of the town of Stapleton. He drove the best appointed equipage in the place, and his fine-stepping, long-tailed grey horses, were a picture of symmetry and beauty, as they stood in their silver-mounted harness before the door, waiting until the bank hours were over, for the wealthy banker to take his drive. Mr. Nugent's house was a large and lofty mansion on the outskirts of the town. It was surrounded by a pleasant lawn and shrubbery, and enclosed by a few acres of pasture land, which it was the owner's ambition to convert

into a park—this being, in his opinion, the only thing wanting to render his domain perfect, and equal to the estate of Sir Henry Cunningham in the next parish. Mr. Nugent's grounds sloped very prettily to the margin of a winding river; but just before his windows, half-way down to the water's edge, stood a small house, which in his opinion spoilt the view entirely. It had a belt of trees round it, so that it was not a very prominent object, or very visible from his premises; but still Mr. Nugent felt that there it was, and he could never forget or forgive it. It was a constant eyesore to him, and a constant annoyance, and he heartily wished that the earth would open her mouth and swallow it up.

This little dwelling belonged to Captain Clayton, an old retired naval officer, and Mr. Nugent had frequently offered him incredible sums, to tempt him to sell it, but without success. It had been in the possession of the Captain's family for many generations; he had been born there himself, and had never left it, excepting when he went to sea; so that he loved his home only second to his daughter, and it was endeared to him by a thousand pleasing and affecting recollections. Captain Clayton lost his wife early in life, which was a dreadful grief to him. He was left with a son and daughter, and he gave up his ship and his

old sea life, to watch over them, and jog on upon his half pay. This he found a difficult matter, as he had not much idea of management and economy. His daughter Ellen soon became a great help to him in this respect, and at the age of fifteen she proved herself such a clever little housekeeper, that Captain Clayton gladly gave up the reins into her hands, and with her management he was able to send his son to school. Arthur was two years younger than Ellen. He was a high-spirited boy, full of mischief, hating books, and spoiled by his sister and by their only servant, old Hester, who had lived in the family ever since Captain Clayton married. She ruled Miss Ellen unmercifully, but gave Master Arthur his own way in every thing. The consequence of all this unwise indulgence at home was, that Arthur found the restraint of school very irksome to him. Lessons were a constant trouble, and the first time he received the flogging which he richly deserved, he managed to make his escape from school, and run away home. Here a grand battle took place between himself and his father. Captain Clayton declared that he should take his son back to school the first thing in the morning, and Arthur as firmly vociferated that nothing should induce him to return to such a disagreeable place, and where they had

treated him so harshly. He would rather leave home for ever than go. Both father and son were of peppery natures, and the altercation ended in Captain Clayton giving Arthur a second flogging, and locking him up in his bedroom to be ready for the next day. Ellen gave way to a flood of tears on the occasion, and Hester thought her master the most cruel father who had ever lived.

When he was safely shut in the drawing-room and having his tea, Hester could not resist the temptation of going to see how her darling boy was. The door of his room was locked, and the key taken away; but they held a conversation in low tones through the keyhole, and he so worked upon her feelings, and represented such a dreadful series of events as happening from his remaining to face his father's anger, that she agreed at last to help him to get away for a short time, that he might conceal himself somewhere near, until his father's wrath was softened, and he could make terms of peace. So when the house was quiet, and her master fast asleep, she crept into his bedroom, and taking the key of which she was in search quietly from his dressing-table, she proceeded with it to Arthur's place of confinement. Here she well oiled the lock, and gently putting in the key she turned it easily, and merely beckoning

with her finger to Arthur, who was anxiously expecting her approach, she led the way to the back door, which she had already opened. Here she pressed a sovereign into his hand, this being all the money she could scrape together, and giving him a basket well filled with eatables, she whispered, "God bless you;" and quickly closing the door after him, she slipped the key of his room back again where she had found it, and returned to bed with a palpitating heart, for she knew that her master slept very lightly, and if he had discovered her treachery, he would never have forgiven her.

The next morning, when Captain Clayton unlocked the door of his son's room, to his astonishment the bird was flown. He examined every part; there was no chimney; the window was high from the ground, and moreover was fastened. It seemed impossible he could have made his escape, and yet it was so. His daughter and Hester both expressed great surprise; but Ellen could not, and his old servant chose not to throw any light upon the subject. So Captain Clayton made up his mind that Arthur must have found a key, by which he could let himself out. He inquired of everybody if they had seen him, but unsuccessfully; and day after day passed, and still there was no news of the runaway. Ellen and Hester fretted, and grew anxious and

unhappy, and Captain Clayton became pale and grave; but Arthur never appeared, nor was one word heard of him. It was now an old story. Six years had passed, and all believed him to be dead, excepting old Hester. She always said, "Mark my words, he will come back again to cheer my poor heart; I shall see him yet before I die." She confessed to Ellen all that had passed during the night he disappeared from home; and her sorrow for having interfered with his father's punishment was so sincere, that Ellen forgave her, and loved her as much as ever. She never told Captain Clayton of Hester's delinquency, for she knew he would find it a hard matter to look over it.

It is a bright summer morning in June. A white-haired, cheerful-looking old gentleman, with a sparkle of fire still remaining in his eye, sits at a simple breakfast with his daughter; and the merry, yet soft music of her laugh, charms the ear, just as we look in upon them. Let us listen to what she is saying, as there seem to be no secrets going on.

"Oh, you dear foolish old papa, I am inclined to be offended with you, for thinking I cannot make a dress every bit as well as Miss Snipp, of Burford. I assure you I consider myself a very superior milliner."

"Well, my dear," said the old man, "I

always think you look very nice, but I do not like you to be called a dowdy."

"It was only the Miss Smiths who said so, papa, and who cares what they say?"

"Who, indeed!" echoed a good-looking young man, peeping in at the open window.

Ellen turned round quickly and coloured deeply, as her eyes met those of Alfred Nugent, the rich banker's only son. He entered through the window, and apologized for his unceremonious intrusion, saying that he had brought a few of the first strawberries that were ripe, being very proud of having been able to find them for once before Captain Clayton, who was celebrated for the early productions of his garden.

"I was not so improper as to listen to your conversation," he added; "but I heard the value of the Miss Smiths' opinion called in question as I drew near. I quite agree to the sentiment, but I confess myself very curious to know what called it forth."

"It was only that poor Ellen was called a 'dowdy,'" replied Captain Clayton, "and I wanted her to have a dress made for once of some fashionable person, that she might look smart for Mrs. Firman's party next week."

"Don't think of it, Captain Clayton," said Alfred Nugent. "Should you like to see your daughter in a dress eighteen feet wide, waving

all round with a dozen flounces, looped up every few inches with festoons of ribbons and flowers?"

The old man looked at Ellen in her fresh, simple attire, so becoming and so appropriate to one who was not above helping their one servant in her house duties, and making herself useful as well as ornamental.

"You cannot make a fine lady of me, papa," she exclaimed, smiling at Captain Clayton; "so it is of no use to try. You must even take me as I am, a homely body."

Alfred gazed at her admiringly. "She is the sweetest creature that ever lived," he thought. "I hope you will enjoy your party at Mrs. Firman's," he uttered aloud; "but unfortunately I cannot ask you to dance with me, as I shall not be here then. I came early to-day, to wish you good-bye before I started, for I am going unexpectedly to Russia."

"To Russia!" echoed both his hearers.

"Yes," he replied, "it is upon some business connected with the bank, and being rather important I am to be intrusted with it."

"When shall you return?" Ellen ventured to ask.

"In less than two months I hope," he replied. "You may be sure I shall not stay away longer than I can help, and I trust I shall find you both as well, and as comfortable

'on my return, as I leave you now," he added, shaking hands with them affectionately.

Ah! he little thought that one of those bright faces he should never see again, and that ere he came back to those familiar scenes, that cheerful home, the abode of so much happiness, would be entirely swept away.

Just before he started Captain Clayton said, "I do not like to detain you, but I want to ask if you consider the Killerton railroad safe, as an investment of capital; for I have just had my money paid in, which had been laid out in a mortgage, and if as they tell me this line be sound, I shall get seven per cent. for my little fortune, and Ellen and I will be rich as Croesus!"

Alfred said he did not like to advise him in this grave matter, and asked him to consult his father, who was so much more competent to give him correct information than he could pretend to be.

Captain Clayton answered, that he hardly liked to go to him, for he had again just refused to sell him his house and garden, so he was afraid he was not in his best books.

"You know," he said, "that I love this little place so much, that I think it would break my heart to part with it."

"Of course it would," answered Alfred, warmly. "My father cannot really wish you

to leave your pleasant house. However, do ask his advice about this business, he will be sure to give you sound counsel."

Accordingly, as soon as the old Captain had opened his hotbed, shaded his blooming tulips from the sun, examined his weather-gauge and thermometer, and watered the plants under the verandah, he went to the bank, and was shown into Mr. Nugent's presence. He entered at once into the business upon which he wished to consult him.

"I thought you would kindly give me advice, upon what is to me of very serious moment," he said, "for this money is all the fortune I have to leave to my daughter; and though obtaining seven per cent. for this sum, would make a pleasant addition to our income, I should of course be very sorry to risk the principal, if there was really any fear of my losing it, and leaving my poor Ellen penniless."

A strange expression crossed the banker's face, and he paused a second before answering. During that second a fearful conflict of good and evil raged in his breast. It was curious that he had then in his pocket a letter from a person he could depend upon, privately warning him against these very shares, and recommending him if he possessed any to sell them if possible without delay, even though

it were at a tremendous sacrifice ; for the company proved to be all moonshine, and in a few days there would be a great crash, and the end would be bankruptcy.

Mr. Nugent soon disposed of the few shares he had, and thought no more upon the subject until now ; and now the Tempter put into his heart, would it not be as well for him to allow Captain Clayton to spend his money in this speculation, as then, when his fortune was gone he must needs part with his house ? it was a terrible moment.

When it was passed, Mr. Nugent said calmly, " Why should you not purchase these shares, Captain Clayton ? Railroads in these days answer very well, and that this line is able to pay so much as seven per cent. is a sign that it succeeds, and is in a prosperous state."

So the old Captain left the bank with a cheerful heart, and at once laid out all his little fortune in the purchase of shares in the Killerton railway ; and that evening he and his daughter made themselves very merry in considering what wonderful things they should do with this addition to their income. Captain Clayton was to get a new mowing machine, and Ellen was to have a dress made by Miss Snipp ; and, above all, Hester was to have her wages raised. Meanwhile Mr. Nugent went home with rather a troubled

conscience; but as his prancing horses dashed his carriage along the smooth drive that led through his grounds to the grand and stately house, and Captain Clayton's modest little dwelling peeped provokingly at him through the trees, he felt a throb of exultation at the thought, that the one blot upon his fair domain, that intrusive annoyance would soon be removed.

Mr. Nugent had the letter that told so plainly against him still in his pocket, and directly he reached his house he locked it up carefully, resolving to burn it the first opportunity. He did not venture to merely tear it in pieces for fear of some one finding the bits, and putting them together again. Some friends were waiting to see him, so he showed them over his elegant garden, and his vinery and hothouses, and was pleased with their admiration and praise; and afterwards he sat down to his *recherché* dinner with good spirits and a good appetite, although he had that very day doomed a poor man to ruin and misery to satisfy his own covetousness.

About a week after this Ellen had washed the breakfast things and put them away, which employment she always took upon herself, and was just returning from the garden with her apron full of flowers, which she was intending to arrange in the vases, when she started in

horror! What dark object was that on the floor of the room? Alas! alas! it was her beloved father! He had fallen from his chair, with his face to the ground, and an open letter clutched in his hand.

Ellen screamed out for Hester, and the two together managed to raise him from the ground, and carry him as far as the sofa. There they bathed his face and hands, and untied his necktie, and tried to get a little brandy between his lips, but to no purpose, he remained lifeless and insensible.

Ellen turned her blanched face towards Hester. "What shall we do?" she whispered.

"Don't you be frightened, Miss Ellen," she said, "it is nothing but a fainting fit; but I will run for the doctor, he will tell us what is the matter, and put us in the right way for being of use."

So Ellen was left alone with her poor father. He lay so motionless that she almost feared the stillness must be death. She knelt down, and with clasped hands she prayed earnestly that God would spare her dear parent to her, the last friend she had left her upon earth.

When the doctor came, she was enabled to rise up very calm, and ready to do all he required of her. He looked very grave when he felt Captain Clayton's pulse, and said he must not be moved from where they had placed him.

He had recourse to bleeding, and at last the poor old man was roused to a sort of stupor, but appeared still quite unconscious. The doctor asked if he had received any bad news that morning, or done anything to excite him? And Ellen remembered the letter, which had fallen from his hand, when they raised him from the ground. She looked at it; it contained the startling intelligence that the Kilmington railway was declared bankrupt. Not only were her father's shares worth nothing, but as a shareholder he was answerable for the debts of the company. She showed this to the doctor, and her lip quivered with agony.

"That quite accounts for this seizure," he said; "but I am very sorry for you, my dear young lady."

Ellen shook her head slowly; she could not enter even upon the subject of the utter ruin of her little fortune, while her father's expressionless features remained before her, so still and calm, the only sign of life being the deep breath coming at slow intervals. Captain Clayton continued in much the same state for four days; his daughter hardly left him night or day, hoping for a look or sign to show that he recognised her, but he was perfectly unconscious; he swallowed with difficulty the restoratives that were poured between his lips, and that was all. Towards the close of the fourth

day Ellen was watching by his couch as usual, for they had not ventured to move him from where he had been first placed, when being worn out with fatigue she fell asleep, and her head drooped forward on her father's pillow; how long she so remained she did not know, but when she awoke she saw with a start of joyful surprise, that his eyes were open and fixed upon her face with his old loving look. She could not speak the first moment, but she took his hand, and felt him gently press hers; she perceived he wanted to say something to her, but she induced him first to swallow a little wine; then slowly, and with the greatest difficulty in articulating each word, Ellen, by straining her attention to the utmost, managed to understand what he tried so hard to express.

"My darling," he gasped, "my poor lonely darling, I leave you a penniless orphan, but the LORD will be your friend, He will provide for you. Do you trust in Him, my dear daughter?" he asked, looking at her sorrowful face.

"I do, dear papa: indeed I do," she answered, while the tears flowed down her cheeks.

"Have faith in God," he said again; "He will take care of you; I do not see how it will be, but I feel that He will support you." Here Captain Clayton paused, though his lips moved, as if he was praying inwardly. Ellen did not

venture to move; she saw with awe, and grief unspeakable, that her loved parent was drawing very near to "the valley of the shadow of death."

Presently he continued, resting his hand upon her bowed head, "I give you all I have, dear child, and that is my blessing: may God bless you;" this he uttered quite distinctly; and very faintly he added, "and your brother." Then the most beautiful smile Ellen had ever seen, passed over his features, and all was still; there was no laboured breath, nor struggle for life, his happy spirit had flown to his SAVIOUR'S arms, while the now useless body must remain below, until at the command of its Maker, it will arise from its narrow resting place, glorified and immortal, and fitted to join the blessed company of angels, and of good men made perfect, who stand round about the throne on high, singing, "Alleluia! for the LORD GOD omnipotent reigneth." A short time afterwards Hester entered the room and found Ellen fallen forward, with her face resting upon her poor father's cold hand; the excitement and grief had been too much for her, and she had fainted. Hester saw what had happened, she called in a kind neighbour, and with her help, she carried her young lady up stairs and placed her in bed, but it was some time before she regained her consciousness, and she was quite

ill for several days ; at the end of that time she roused herself, and to the surprise of all her friends she signified her intention of attending her father's funeral ; they tried to dissuade her from the attempt, but to no purpose, she remained firm, and said she should be much more miserable not to go. It was a touching sight to see the poor orphaned girl in her deep mourning come forth from her old home, to be hers so short a time longer, and attended only by her faithful servant, follow her last remaining parent to the grave. Waiting outside the house were a great many neighbours, all dressed in black, who fell in with the sad procession, and paid their last tribute of respect to the good old man, whom everybody loved, and who had been ready to help all those who were in want, to the utmost of his power.

After the funeral Ellen did not give way to her sorrow, but set herself earnestly to work to settle her father's affairs ; she saw at once that her dear home must be given up, so when Mr. Nugent's lawyer came and offered her favourable terms for it, she accepted them at once. Mr. Nugent did not appear himself in the matter, he could not have borne to face the poor desolate orphan ; and to do him justice, he was shocked at the turn events had taken, for he did not wish to have been the cause of the death of the old Captain. How-

ever, having obtained the plot of ground he coveted, he gloried in having done so, and took possession of it, giving orders for the house to be levelled to the ground with all speed. Ellen paid all her father's creditors, as far as was in her power, and resisted Hester's entreaties that she should live with her upon her savings, and she then found that nothing remained for her but to become a governess. She had received a very good sound education from Captain Clayton; her musical talents were above the common, and her character was so much liked and respected that she obtained a situation at once in the town of Stapleton, and had the charge of Mrs. Moberly's two little girls.

People pitied her pale sad face when they met her, or saw her at church, and they fancied that besides the death of her father, the cause for her deep grief must be, that her old home was being rased to the ground as fast as the workmen could undermine its foundations; this was a great trial to her no doubt, but the overwhelming sorrow was the conviction that she had now placed an insuperable obstacle to a union between herself and Alfred Nugent. Before this dreadful crash came she saw no such wonderful disparity in the marriage of herself with the son of the banker; he was a rich man no doubt, but then her family was a higher one than his, and if they both loved

one another the disproportion in worldly wealth was not, in her opinion, anything to cavil at. But now it was different; when she saw Mr. Nugent standing tall and stately in his grand pew at church, and thought of herself, without a home, without a sixpence, excepting those she earned, a poor governess, depending upon the favour and whims of her employers; she felt that times were altered, and that it behoved her to tear Alfred from her heart, and to devote her life to her God and her duties. The remembrance of her father's last words was a great support to her; she endeavoured to walk in faith, taking only one step at a time, which she knew to be right, and then trusting all to the mercy of her SAVIOUR, Who she knew cared for her; if she was not happy, she was calm and resigned, for "God keeps those in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on Him."

Mr. Nugent was taking a last survey of his grounds before he went in the house to dress for dinner, which was put off until seven o'clock to-day, as he expected his son home, who had accomplished the business that took him to Russia, in a satisfactory manner, though, as is generally the case, it had taken twice the time he expected. The daylight had faded away some time, but a bright October moon looked down with a clear placid face upon the fair scene; very fair Mr. Nugent thought it was,

and now he reflected with pride all was his own; that which he had struggled for so long was accomplished; the poor old Captain's house was swept away, its very site was concealed by fresh turf, which also covered over what had formerly been the dainty garden, so carefully tended by Ellen and her father. Yes, the whole distance, as far as the river, which looked so lovely, winding like a silver thread in the flood of moonlight, was at last his own possession.

Mr. Nugent thought with triumphant gladness his place might properly be called a park; "Stapleton Park" would sound well, he should consult his son upon the subject, the heir to this fine property. By the by, Alfred used to have a fancy for Miss Clayton, he must talk him out of that, it would never do for the heir of Stapleton Park to marry a poor governess; what a pity it was that Captain Clayton did not live, and retire to some out-of-the-way part of the country with his daughter, it would have saved all trouble; but the banker finished his reflections by remarking that we do not get every thing just as we like in this world.

He then went into the house, and made himself very spruce to receive his son; he waited for him in the library, where a cheerful fire was blazing; the clock struck seven, the punctual man of business began to be anxious,

when there was a crunching sound of wheels on the gravel; he went into the hall, the entrance door was already thrown open, and the father and son were soon shaking hands heartily.

Alfred was looking all the better for his four months of travel, he was in good spirits on his return home, and seemed full of life and animation, his father might well be proud as well as fond of him. He will be a fit successor to this fine estate, was continually in Mr. Nugent's mind, as he sat opposite to him at the table.

After dinner Mr. Nugent and Alfred went back to the library to have a cosy chat together. Just as they were parting for the night, Alfred asked after the family who had been on the tip of his tongue all the evening, but a sort of shyness had held back their names.

"I hope old Captain Clayton is well, father? it was curious that I looked for his house as I came along, and somehow in the uncertain moonlight I suppose, I missed seeing it."

"That is not to be wondered at, for I have pulled it down," answered Mr. Nugent, then seeing the start of horror and indignation expressed in his son's face, he added hastily, "the truth is, the poor man died, and his affairs were found to be in a very involved state, so I bought his house, giving a good sum for it."

Alfred groaned, he seemed like one stunned with the sad news, "And his daughter," he gasped out, "where is she? oh, father, I love her with all my heart."

"I believe she is governess to some one," said Mr. Nugent, "but we will talk of this another time, it is late now, and I am sure you must be tired."

"Wait one moment," said Alfred, "did Captain Clayton come to you the day I left home, to ask your advice about purchasing some shares in the Killerton Railway?"

"I believe he did, as far as I remember," replied Mr. Nugent, taken aback at this sudden question.

"And acting upon your counsel, he bought them, and was ruined. Oh, my father, is this possible?" asked Alfred, his voice trembling with agony.

"How was I to know that the company were on the verge of bankruptcy?" said Mr. Nugent.

"Yet you got rid of your own shares," remarked his son; "did not Mr. West give you intelligence of the danger of having any thing to do with that railroad? he was one of the directors, and being a friend of yours, did he not give you a hint to withdraw your own money?"

Mr. Nugent felt his face blanch, he was

driven to desperation, he dared not own the truth, so he blurted out a falsehood. "No, of course not, or else I should have mentioned it."

He saw that his son hardly believed him, and he knew himself to be suspected, so as soon as Alfred was gone sorrowfully to bed, he determined to look for the dreadful letter from Mr. West, which told so plainly against him, and burn it without loss of time; he had forgotten it lately, but if it was ever seen by any one, he could never lift up his head again in Stapleton. He therefore searched long and carefully, but he could not find it anywhere, he had put it away in such a secret place, that he could not even discover it himself; he knew it was somewhere in that room, so he turned out every drawer in the book-case, he emptied the piles of papers from his *escritoir* and examined them one by one; the clock struck two while he was thus engaged, he was very tired, but he was determined not to rest until he had found it. At last slipped in between two other letters it came to light,—he first burnt the envelope in the candle, as the fire was gone out, and then tore the letter into pieces, and burnt the fragments, and directly afterwards went to bed with a feeling of relief that this witness could not appear against him, and he slept soundly.

But we will now have a look at Ellen Clay-

ton, who could not sleep this night ; she knew from the gossip of the place that Alfred was to return home that evening ; her head was full of what he would say when he heard of her poor father's death, and her fallen circumstances, but she resolved that she ought not to think any more about him, and tried to believe that he was nothing to her. At last she was so restless, that she got out of bed, and looked into the night,—what does she see ! in the direction of Mr. Nugent's house was a frightful glare, the whole heaven was glowing with it,—there must be a terrible fire not far off. She does not hesitate a minute, she dashes on some clothes, and with a large shawl wrapped round her, she quietly lets herself out of the front door, which closes with a spring after her, and she is soon running fast towards Mr. Nugent's house ; on the road she overtakes a young man who is walking leisurely along in the same direction, she paused for a second to take breath.

"Are you going to the fire?" the young man said. "I was afraid at first it was at Captain Clayton's ; but the people assure me it is Mr. Nugent's house that is on fire, so I don't care so much."

"Captain Clayton's house is no more," Ellen felt compelled to say ; "so the fire must be at Mr. Nugent's."

"Captain Clayton's house gone!" echoed the young man. "And where, pray tell me, is the poor old man and his daughter?"

"Alas, he is dead!" said Ellen.

"Dead!" exclaimed the young man; "and shall I never see him again? never ask his forgiveness for my petulance, and for staying away from him all these years?"

"Who are you? Speak," said Ellen, standing still, and facing him, while a trembling fit shook her from head to foot.

"I am his son Arthur," he almost sobbed. "At first I ran away and enlisted as a sailor, and then I had a bad fever, and was left behind in Africa, for they thought I must die; but I recovered, and I determined not to return to England until I had made a fortune to support my father and sister; and I was a good shot, and traded in skins and elephants' tusks, and saved and scraped a little money together, and now it is too late, my poor father! Oh! I am rightly punished for my unruly disobedience."

Ellen had listened to him without the power of speaking, scanning each well-remembered feature. Now she could contain herself no longer. She opened her arms wide. "Arthur," she cried, "my dear, long lost brother, have you returned to me at last?"

And such a happy meeting ensued as baffles

description. We will leave the brother and sister for a short time, to inquire how Mr. Nugent and his son fared during this awful fire.

Mr. Nugent awoke up with a horrible feeling of suffocation. He opened his eyes, a strong glare came from under his door, and he heard the hissing, crackling sound of fire close to him. With the instinct of self-preservation he jumped out of bed, and throwing a blanket round him, opened his door. The stairs were one blaze of light—flames darting through the mahogany banisters, and shooting up from beneath. He rushed in the midst of them, and arrived with bare and blistered feet at the bottom of the stairs. They crashed and fell into burning fragments almost as he descended them. Here he scented the fresh open air, and heard voices calling and vociferating. He blindly followed the sound through tongues of flame and volumes of stifling smoke, and found himself in the garden amidst a crowd of people, who seemed very excited, but did not appear to know what to do. The servants were all there, but where was his son? He called, he screamed "Alfred, Alfred," but no voice answered him. The flames now darted out of the windows, and seemed hungry and eager to lick up his son's blood.

"I will give ten thousand pounds to anyone

who will scale that third window to the right," cried Mr. Nugent; but no one answered him.

The flames were flaring underneath, and though money was dear to all, lives were dearer, and no one liked to run such a risk. Yes, surely there is hope. Two men come running up with a ladder. They place it against the burning house, and under that closed window. Alas! alas! it is not long enough; it wants ten more feet to reach that window, within which his only child is stifling in that dense smoke.

Mr. Nugent groaned aloud, "I have murdered my son!" he shrieked, "I set fire to the house with burning the papers that condemned me, and now my covetousness has destroyed him. It is a just punishment." He covered his face with his hands; he could not endure to see the roof fall in, and bury in its hideous ruin his beloved and only son. Suddenly he felt a hand touch him, and a soft voice exclaimed, "Courage, all is not yet lost. See, there is hope. My brother is trying his best to save him."

Mr. Nugent looked up. Ellen was standing close by. It was the daughter of the man he had ruined who spoke those cheering words; it was that poor man's son who was endeavouring to save his, at the risk of his own

life! Surely in that moment the agony and remorse of a lifetime might be concentrated.

Arthur put the hitherto useless ladder upon the ground, and lashing a pole securely to the end of it, with the quickness and dexterity of which only a sailor is capable, he fastened another rope round his own body, and placing the ladder again against the house, some of the spectators held it firmly there, and it was seen that the pole was long enough to reach to the window of Alfred's room. But will that adventurous young man dare to trust himself on such a dangerous support, in the midst of those raging, roaring flames, which are darting below and on all sides of him? Every eye of the great multitude now assembled is fixed upon Arthur, who soon runs up the steps of the ladder. And now the difficult part begins. He clasps the pole tightly with both hands, and twisting his legs also round it, he mounts hand over hand, slowly but surely. The crowd hardly venture to breathe, as he clambers on to the window-sill, and stands there as securely as if he were a cat. With one dash he breaks the glass, and throwing open the window, leaps in and disappears from the anxious gaze of the people below.

The excitement now is tremendous, the people surge and wave about like a troubled sea, and a sort of suppressed sound is heard,

as of people catching their breath in horror. Suppose he should be already dead, stifled in that cruel smoke.

Mr. Nugent stared helplessly in Ellen's face hoping to gather comfort from her whose lover and brother were both in such fearful peril, but there was a sort of look there he could hardly understand, her eyes were cast upon that all absorbing window with a wrapt expression, as if, "come weal, come woe," all would be right, because One directed events Who knew better than she did what was good for them all.

Presently by the light of the fearful fire, which rendered everything distinctly visible, they could see a dark object dragged to the window. Ah, poor Alfred is then dead, suffocated in that dreadful atmosphere, his head drops against the frame of the window.

Mr. Nugent falls on his knees, he can support himself no longer, Ellen's lips move as if in prayer, a shudder thrills through the vast crowd when, praise be to God, the fresh air revives Alfred, he raises his head slowly, and appears to be trying to understand something Arthur is saying to him; and now the most perilous part begins, the descent of the two young men down that pole, which appears to those below like a thread hanging in the air. Arthur goes first, steadying Alfred who also holds fast by

the rope, the end of which has been secured in the room he has just left. Slowly, slowly they come down, but not until the last round of the ladder is reached do the crowd venture upon the cheer which has been swelling in their throats ever since this bold venture appeared likely to be successful, and then such a grand English cheer rent the air as would never be forgotten by any one there present.

Both the young men had their hands nearly shaken off by those nearest to them.

Ellen's whole soul was raised to heaven in praise and thanksgiving, and Mr. Nugent fell down in a swoon; the extreme tension on his mind had been too much for his nervous system, and on his recovering from his fainting fit, it was found that he had lost his memory, the past was a blank to him, he was imbecile all the rest of his life. He was very good-tempered, and delighted in the company of children, and altogether was very contented and happy, but his mind never recovered its equilibrium which it lost on that awful night.

Alfred and Ellen were married, and built another house upon the foundation of the old one, but not quite such a pompous-looking building as the former. Mr. Nugent lived with them till his death, as did also old Hester, who tries to spoil Ellen's children as much as she did "Master Arthur," but this he will not

allow on the right and responsibility of being uncle and godfather; he says he will not permit them to be made such reprobates as he was himself, and many a tussle he and Hester have in consequence. He has taken a farm near his sister and Alfred, and hunts, and shoots, and fishes, and tries all sorts of new improvements and dodges in the agricultural line.

Everybody is glad to see him, for he is a very amusing companion, and tells all sorts of queer stories about his wild life among the savages in Africa. He has just finished, with Alfred's and Ellen's help, what they have been all anxious about for some time, and that is erecting a church upon the spot where his father's cherished home once stood. The town has been very much increasing in that direction, and a church was very much wanted there. Alfred gladly gave the ground, and a very pretty building rose among the trees. It was with deep thankfulness that the three united hearts heard the first call to prayer chime from the elegant spire that formed such a handsome and suggestive object from the windows of their house. They felt that they had followed what would have been the wishes of their dear father the good old Captain Clayton, had he lived to see the turn events had taken, and that his blessing would rest

upon them. And they felt the necessity of daily rising and offering up the prayer to God, "Incline my heart to Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness," lest with so many blessings showered upon them they might forget the Giver of all good things, and become like those who "with their mouth show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness."

JANUARY, 1865.

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